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YOUNG PRIMA DONNA.

A ROMANCE OF THE OPERA.

MRS. ALLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE PRIMA DONNA."

NEW YORK

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The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., dated [redacted].

[The remainder of the document contains several paragraphs of extremely faint, illegible typed text.]

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 1, 1861. It is a formal address, and it begins with the words "My Countrymen," which is a traditional way of addressing the people in a formal document. The letter is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is signed by the President, James Buchanan.

1. The first step in the process of the development of a new product is the identification of a market need. This is often done through market research, which can be conducted in a variety of ways, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The goal is to understand what customers want and need, and to identify any gaps in the current market.

... ..

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 Long before the first issue of the Chicago Tribune was published, the city was a center of newspaper activity. The first newspaper published in Chicago was the Chicago Democrat, which was founded in 1837. It was the first newspaper to be published in the city, and it was the first to be published in the United States. The Chicago Democrat was published by John W. Alden, and it was the first newspaper to be published in the city. The Chicago Democrat was published by John W. Alden, and it was the first newspaper to be published in the city. The Chicago Democrat was published by John W. Alden, and it was the first newspaper to be published in the city.

2. *For the purpose of this Act, the expression "the Government" shall mean the Government of India.*

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THE

YOUNG PRIMA DONNA:

A ROMANCE OF THE OPERA.

Elizabeth Caroline
BY MRS. GREY,

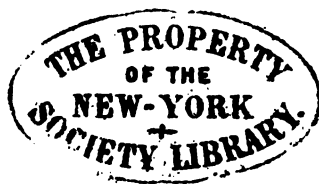
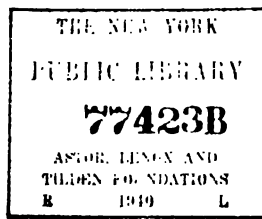
AUTHOR OF "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE," &c.

"Early bright, transient, chaste, as morning dew,
She sparkled, was exhaled, and went to Heaven."

K. _____

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THE

YOUNG PRIMA DONNA.

CHAPTER I.

I am an old man, and old more from infirmities than years. Sickness and time, however, though they have robbed me of many blessings, have left my memory fresh and green, as in the days of my childhood. To this I am indebted for almost the only amusement that remains to me. I sit and ruminate upon the days that are gone, and although these recollections are often fraught with agonizing sorrow, I dwell upon them with a degree of tenacity, which shows how indelibly their memory is engraven on my heart.

To forget or to remember, at pleasure, is equally beyond the power of man. Sometimes I wish I could forget;—perhaps it is better as it is.

“Let fate do her worst, there are moments of joy, Bright dreams of the past, which she cannot destroy,

Which come in the night time of sorrow and care, And bring back the features that joy used to wear.

Long, long be my heart with such memories filled, Like a vase in which roses have once been distilled, You may break—you may ruin the vase if you will, But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

It is one of the melancholy pleasures of declining life, to recollect every circumstance concerning departed friends, whose beloved forms we can no longer see. In these serious moments of reflection, how relieving is the thought—what cordial balm to the heart, to know that the separation is only temporary—not eternal—that there is a time to come of reunion with those, with whom our happiest days on earth were spent. When the short dream of life is over—when the dismal phantoms shall vanish at the brightness of the everlasting day.

“Then shall no fate again divide the souls,
Which nature thou didst for each other form.”

My solitary hours have lately been enlivened by the occasional society of a kind friend who passes every unemployed evening with me. To him, with all the garrulity of old age, I have unburdened my mind, by relating many a story of by-gone days; and so interested has he been, in the narration of some of them, that he has persuaded me to allow him to transcribe my words. Thence is the origin

of the present tale, which, from its importunity, I have been tempted to bring from the depths of an old man's memory.

I am by profession a clergyman; but a morbid feeling of the necessity of locomotion, prevented my ever becoming a steady performer of my clerical duties. I wandered far and near, and France, and the other European countries, I was for ever visiting.

However, it did happen that, for a few brief years, I was stationary:—perhaps I might have continued so for the rest of my life, but circumstances proved adverse to this event. I had accepted a curacy in a peaceful happy spot, and soon became so fond of it, and of the inhabitants of the *locale*, that I could have ended my days amongst them; but my restor dying—after some of the happiest years I ever spent—I was obliged to give up the curacy and again resumed my life of pilgrimage.

It was during the period to which I have just alluded, that I became acquainted with the loved being who is to be the heroine of my tale.

My parsonage was situated almost within the walls of the park, belonging to the Marquis of Belmont. It was a sweet picturesque little spot, possessing all the advantages which stately woods, and magnificent scenery afford.

My memory dwells for ever on that beautiful home, which, for a brief space, I could call my own. My garden in all the luxuriance of summer charms!—Methinks I can even smell the perfume of my favourite flowers, when in the early morning I sallied forth to greet my treasures. Oh! memory—memory! how it lingers over every cherished spot and nook of this, to me, almost a paradise! During the course of my wandering life, these were my only days of tranquil happiness: they were as fleeting, as they were sweet.

The Marquis and his children were excellent people, and the young and rising family were ever to me objects of interest and admiration. The Village of Fairbourne was a pattern of neatness and comfort. The inhabitants, for the most part, an industrious and artless race, and most solicitous did I feel, both for their spiritual and temporal welfare.

There was one little white cottage, standing rather apart from the rest of the houses, and surrounded by a small garden, which had been for some time unoccupied. One morning, however, on my walking through the village, I perceived an un-

usual degree of bustle, within its hitherto untenanted walls. The windows were all open, and the noise of scrubbing bushes was heard in every direction. I was still standing with a degree of inquisitive speculation, intending to make some inquiries upon the subject, when a cart drove up, laden with furniture belonging to the new tenant.

I had been away for a fortnight, therefore had heard none of the village gossip; so I stepped into the shop, *par excellence*, in order to gain every information concerning my new parishioner. I was told that the expected inhabitant of the white cottage was the widow of an officer, left with one little girl, and that her name was Elton.

"She seems but poor in plight, Sir," said the grocer, "for I hear that her husband was killed in battle, and has left her with no other provision but her pension; however, she has the cottage for next to nothing, and as this is a cheap place for living, perhaps she may be able to get on. The cottage is certainly a poor abode, if she has seen better days."

I returned home this day full of the white cottage and the widow lady, conjuring up all sorts of romantic visions with regard to her, and her situation. She arrived in the course of the week, and I, in due time, paid her my pastoral visit, but as usual was disappointed.

Mrs. Elton was a common-place sort of woman, about thirty-five years old, full of cares and perplexities, which rendered her cross and fidgetty, and evidently possessing very little self-possession, or arrangement. Her cottage, however, was already put into decent order.

On my complimenting her upon the activity she displayed, in so soon giving a home appearance to her new abode, she replied:—"Oh, Sir! I have had nothing to do with it. I have neither the spirits nor the strength to exert myself. I can do little else than sit and cry over my misfortunes; it has all been done by Rosalie and her nurse."

Then it was Rosalie that I was anxious to see; but on my requesting to be introduced to the young lady, her mother told me that most probably she was not fit to be seen, and that I must excuse her appearing that day, for though she was a good girl, she was seldom a very tidy one, and now that she had so much to do, she was not presentable.

"In her poor father's life-time," Mrs. Elton continued, "some pains were taken with her education; and when we were abroad, she had the benefit of masters; but now I suppose she must give up every thing, and just turn into a mere household drudge. I am sure," she added, whimpering, "I can do nothing for her."

The young lady's scruples were not as great as those of her mamma, for scarcely had she thus spoken, when the door opened, and in she walked.

I must allow that she was not strictly neat in her appearance: her clothes were soiled, and she was evidently heated by household exertions—but there was something in the countenance of the little girl, as she stopped short, confused and blushing, at the door—confounded by the unexpected sight of a stranger, and by her mother's reprehensive looks, which went directly to my heart. Not that beauty was her recommendation, for at this time, Rosalie had very little.

She was a short girl of ten years old, with a remarkably sallow complexion; however, the vivid blush with which she greeted me, brightened her skin, and showed to the greatest advantage, a pair of—certainly—the most magnificent eyes I had ever beheld. In a moment afterwards, the blush had faded, and the complexion resumed its swarthy-

ness; without its assistance, the eyes lost all their splendour.

Mrs. Elton rebuked the little girl for her abrupt entrance, and ordered her to leave the room. She would have obeyed immediately had not I taken hold of one of her—I must allow—*dirty* small hands, and drawn her towards me. This simple action was the foundation of our farther friendship. Rosalie seemed gratified, for she turned her large eyes upon me with a look of affection, which I remember at this moment, and leant caressingly against me whilst I spoke to her.

We very soon became acquainted, and I went home, filled with a degree of interest for my newly acquired young friend, which I felt would be both strong and lasting.

The next morning, as I was walking through the village, my thoughts reverted to my little acquaintance, and I sallied towards the garden-gate, merely to look over it, in the hope of gaining a sight of her black eyes.

I saw her at a short distance, up to her ears in soil and dirt, busily digging a flower-bed; but my steps were riveted to the spot on which I stood, and my surprised senses listened to a strain of melody—as unexpected as it was beautiful.

Notwithstanding her laborious occupation, Rosalie was singing an Italian air from one of Rossini's operas, and so splendid was the voice, and so extraordinary the execution, that I, who from my long residence in Italy—the land of song—am a passionate lover of music, was enchanted beyond the power of description.

I listened until she suddenly broke off the strain in the midst of a beautiful cadence; her attention was attracted by the sight of a large worm which she had disturbed during her labours, and whose progress she was now watching with infantile delight. What a contrast between her child-like actions, and the extraordinary science her voice exhibited! I opened the gate, and walked towards her. She was delighted to see me, and unrestrained by the presence of her mother, chattered on with childish freedom.

I soon discovered all her wants and wishes. She was very fond of flowers, but her present garden was quite uncultivated. I found that two or three days' labour would set it all to rights, and promised to send a man to perform the task—and plants and seeds.

Rosalie's face beamed with delight at the anticipation of her expected treasures.

"Thank you—thank you a thousand times, dear good Sir," she exclaimed, in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude.

"But I expect to be repaid, Rosalie," I said. Her countenance fell.

"What have I to give? Not one flower—nothing in the world."

"Yes, you have; you must sing to me just such another song, as I heard you so sweetly warbling whilst I stood at the gate."

"Oh! if that is all," she exclaimed, joyfully, "I will repay you to the very extent of your wishes. What shall it be?"

She then seated herself upon a broken bench. "Sit down by me," she said, "and I will sing to you as long as you please."

And she did sing; and so beautifully, that my curiosity, as well as my admiration, was excited.

"And where did you learn this?" I asked, as she had finished.

"Oh!" she replied, "I have sung ever since was born." She added, with a deep sigh, "poor father doated upon music—he was an exc

lent performer, and took great pains with me. Then, abroad, I went very often to the opera, and we saw a good deal of professional people, who liked to hear me sing, and taught me the fine songs I have just been singing. But I know some English airs if you like them better"—and then she commenced that beautiful ditty, "Auld Robin Gray."

Can I ever forget that clear young voice—those tones of native melody?

No!—at this moment, though years have passed by, their sounds still ring in my ears. I feel, indeed, that they were angelic strains, and I indulge in the hope that I shall hear them again. The lips from which they proceeded are cold in death. Although that voice of melody is now mute—in heaven, it is my cherished idea—my dearest hope, that my sweet young friend may be one of the choir of angels who sing eternal praises at the throne of God! May I, through the merits of His Son, meet her hereafter in those realms of peace!

CHAPTER II.

It was the month of May; the Marquis's family were in London, and not expected to return to the country until August. Before this period my acquaintance with Rosalie had deepened into extreme intimacy. I soon discovered her family history. Her mother—a great beauty, though penniless—had married Mr. Elton, then a lieutenant in a marching regiment, with no other income but his pay. She had been abroad with her husband, who, having there attained the rank of captain, fell in an engagement, leaving his widow and child almost destitute. By the assistance of some friends, she was enabled to return to England, and to furnish the cottage in which she was now residing, where, upon a scanty pittance, she believed she was doomed to pass the rest of her life. She was accompanied by one female servant, a soldier's wife, whose husband had perished on the field of glory. She had nursed the little Rosalie from her birth; and from the firm mind of this good woman, the child had gained all the excellence which she afterwards displayed. I found the little girl almost totally uneducated, but anxious, beyond all measure, to learn. My plan was soon arranged; she was to come to me every morning, and I was to be her instructor. These were pleasant hours to me; her quickness was incredible, and my zeal in teaching equally great.

Education, when it works upon a superior mind, draws out to view every talent and perfection; personal virtue displays its greatness—the sentiments become generous—the manners endearing—it gives a polish to every action. Rosalie improved every day; her manners softened; even her countenance increased in expression, for, before we met, the poor child had many disadvantages against which to struggle. Her mother's temper was capricious and unamiable, and I soon discovered that she was both ignorant and silly. Rosalie had never been properly managed, so no wonder that the seeds of evil, as well as of good, had been implanted in her nature; those of evil were but of fragile growth—the soil from which they sprung was too rich and good to nurture them, and every day I witnessed new perfections in my little pupil.

The autumn came, and with the season the

family of the Park arrived to gladden every heart. The party consisted of a great many children, of all ages, from babies, to youths of fifteen and sixteen. They were a charming group!

The Marchioness was an excellent, kind-hearted woman; unspoilt by prosperity and the world—her tastes were simple. She, as well as her noble husband, loved the country and unostentatious pursuits, and were both desirous that their children should do the same. Their return to Belmont Abbey was hailed with joy by every class.

The countenances of the young people were open and beautiful, with an expression of high-breeding, at the same time full of affability and cheerfulness. The youths of the family were tall and gracefully made, and their whole appearance natural and easy.

As an admired author expresses himself, "There is a healthful hardness about real dignity, that never dreads contact and communion with others, however humble; it is only spurious pride that is morbid and sensitive." The young ladies delighted to stop and talk to the poor people of the village—to notice the children, and hear the story of the humble cottagers. I loved them all, and their return was, ever to me, a gala day.

I now hoped that I had prepared for them a pleasant surprise. We had always been very proud of our little village choir; it had been one of my most favourite hobbies, and I had been assisted, very assiduously, by the young ladies and their governess—a German, who possessed great musical abilities. Now, I had indeed, gained a powerful auxiliary! Rosalie practised hard to produce an effect, and was to introduce a solo for the first Sunday's anthem. Her strong *contralto* voice was beautifully adapted to church music. It was thus I intended to present my little *protegee* to this illustrious family.

Saturday arrived, and the whole aspect of the place was brightened by the presence of its noble owners. The next day, as usual, the whole household joyfully attended my little church.

My heart beat high at the moment the music commenced, when Rosalie appeared in front of the gallery, and chanted forth, with the utmost sweetness and skill, that beautiful sacred song of Pergolesi's, "Lord! have mercy upon me!" She was ably accompanied by our organist, a young beginner of some science.

My eyes, for a moment, fell upon the countenances of the occupants of the Belmont pew, and I saw with satisfaction, that admiration, surprise, and delight beamed from them. Certainly, nothing could well surpass the beauty of the voice of the little *cantatrice*, and, although far from lovely, her childish appearance and sweet countenance were passports which found their way into the hearts of all who heard her.

From this moment Rosalie might date the happiness, which flowed with a rich current, during the five ensuing years of her life—days, indeed, of joy to her, sweet soul! although their brilliancy, perhaps, rendered those that followed but the more dark and dismal.

In the bitterness of my feelings I sometimes blame myself; but still the firm reliance that God directs our every effort must solace me; and the conviction that he often "chasteneth whom he loveth," is my support, when self-reproach wrings my heart, and I bow my head in humility to his dispensations. His consolations are the only true ones; and now I comfort myself by thinking, that all the sorrows she felt in this world, have been but thorns in her passage to that eternal state, in

which, I reverentially trust, she is far happier than we who are still on earth.

Rosalie became almost domesticated at the Abbey. The family were all enthusiasts upon the subject of music, and this circumstance, in the first instance, made them patronise the little singer. The German governess, Mademoiselle Kramer, was too happy to assist in cultivating such splendid talent; and the English instructress willingly lent her aid to perfect her in other branches of education. I also continued my lessons, therefore our little girl did not lack tuition; and Mademoiselle Kramer and I had soon settled in our own minds, that Rosalie was to be brought up in such a manner, as would fit her for a first rate governess.

She soon became a universal favourite throughout the whole house; her sweet temper and lively disposition, made her equally acceptable in the nursery, school-room, and drawing-room. The little ones clung round her with infantine love, and the elder children prized her for her acquirements and excellent qualities.

Lord and Lady Belmont felt much interest for Rosalie, and considered her society an advantage to their daughters, as she was too happy to impart to them all she could, of the talent she possessed to so brilliant a degree. And the boys—though they sometimes laughed at her, and called her “Rose, Rose! coal black Rose,” and quizzed her little squat figure—still, they were not happy without her; and when they returned home for their vacations, “Where is the yellow rose?” was the first question they asked, if they did not see her immediately on their arrival.

The eldest son, Lord Fitz-Ernest, was a charming youth. He was ever the kind friend of our little heroine; he always called her by her own pretty name, and, in the mischievous pranks of his brothers, which were often aimed to tease and torment “the dark little Rose,” she had invariably found a supporter in him.

He was passionately fond of music, and, in her labours of practising, to give him pleasure was her greatest aim. On his return to his home, how charmed was she to exhibit before him all her new songs, and the improvement she had made in his absence!—to hear his praise had been her hope during all her exertions to attain perfection in the science.

This was, indeed, a luxurious life for Rosalie, for many months, at least, in the year. The rest of the time she spent ostensibly with her mother, although, during the greater part of the day, she was to be seen at the rectory.

Mrs. Elton was any thing but an intellectual companion for her daughter. She had been accustomed to a life of gaiety and variety, and now, completely thrown upon her own resources, was for ever whining and bewailing her condition. She was jealous of the situation her daughter held at the Abbey, for Lady Belmont did not extend much of her notice to her. She was too vulgar-minded to meet with much reciprocity of sentiment from the refined members of Belmont Abbey.

They were, however, attentive to her wants, and she was liberally supplied with temporal civilities. The gamekeeper had orders never to forget her; the Abbey garden afforded her fruit and vegetables; but Mrs. Elton was never satisfied. To live in a town was her ambition, where she might have gossip and tea parties in abundance. Nothing kept her in our village but my remonstrances, and frequent endeavours to impress upon her mind, the advantages which a residence there

afforded her daughter. The time, to her, passed slowly and heavily; her temper became fretful, and her ennui almost insupportable.

CHAPTER III.

We will pass over a lapse of time—several years—which glided by in quick and happy succession. Rosalie increased in wisdom, but slowly in stature. Perhaps it was to her diminutive figure she owed a great deal of the indulgence she received throughout the whole of the Belmont family. Although almost fifteen, she looked a complete child. Had she attained the growth of others of her own age, it might have entered the Marchioness’s head, that such a fascinating and accomplished girl, would be rather a dangerous companion for her sons, some of whom were nearly grown up. As it was, Rosalie still continued their little pet and plaything.

Never did they return home without bringing with them some token, which showed that they remembered her, even when absent. Lord Fitz-Ernest evinced towards her, perhaps, the greatest share of good will; he was older than his brothers, and of a graver and more sensitive disposition. He could not bear to see his little *protégée* for a moment mortified; therefore, in all their parties of pleasure, he took care that Rosalie should be included. He saw that she was provided with a pony, which best suited her—or if a carriage excursion was in question, she must be squeezed in—even if there was no other seat than his knee.

“My dear Fitz-Ernest,” I once heard Lady Belmont say, “I fear we are almost spoiling that child—placing her in a false position, at least in one unfitting her for what is to be her fate hereafter, for her situation in society. Poor little thing! in a very few years—for we forget her age—she must commence the wearisome *metier* of governess. All we are now doing for her—making her so happy, and upon such a complete equality with your sisters, will, I almost think, cause her to enter her vocation with disgust.”

“But she is still such a baby,” replied the young man; “it must be a very long time before her misfortunes commence.”

“I beg your pardon, you forget that she is nearly fifteen.”

“Fifteen,” exclaimed Fitz-Ernest, laughing, “she is more like a child of nine years old. I am sadly afraid our coal black Rose, as Henry calls her, will never make a dignified *institutrice*. Fancy that brat teaching the young ideas how to shoot. Not that she lacks them herself, for she’s a clever little thing.”

And at the same moment, seeing her upon the lawn, he rushed out of the open window, and soon was seen engaged in a game of romps, with her and his sisters.

I must particularly mention Lady Gertrude.—This sweet girl was about the age of Rosalie, but most unlike her in personal appearance. She was tall, exquisitely fair, and beautiful. She had ever evinced the greatest affection for our heroine. All the sisters loved her, but none with the tenderness of the lovely Gertrude; to her she looked up with a feeling approaching to adoration. She was Rosalie’s *beau-ideal* of earthly perfection. To see the two girls together, no one would have guessed that their ages were so nearly alike. Lady Gertrude

looked the woman, Rosalie the child. This sweet young lady was so kind, so fond of her, so anxious for her improvement—for her happiness, that could she have had it all her own way, they would never have been separated. She often importuned her mother to allow Rose to accompany them to London, but Lady Belmont thought it would be hard upon Mrs. Elton, and would not comply with this desire.

During the course of this summer, Belmont Abbey was destined to receive a visit from royalty, and we were to have nothing but fetes and grand doings. To these festive days, the young people looked forward with great delight. Poor Rosalie! little did she dream how deeply her fate was involved in the events which this visit produced! Her race of happiness was almost run—the whole aspect of her situation was about to change.

Amongst the various amusements provided for the illustrious guest, some professional people were engaged to perform, during the evenings. Rosalie, whose voice improved every year, was also to take her part. Anxiously and arduously had she worked, to do honour to the instructions she had received under the roof of her benefactors. Mademoiselle Kramer was most proud of her pupil, and longed to exhibit her almost as a rival to some of the *artistes*. She forgot how richly Rosalie had been gifted by nature, and fancied she owed every thing to her skill in teaching, which was in truth very great. Laboriously did she make the little girl practice, both vocal and instrumental music, before the expected arrival. Had she guessed what were to be the results of all this perfection, how mute would have been her voice—how inflexible her fingers.

Rosalie was in a state of great nervous excitement during this period, and I did not think that she was in good spirits. She appeared over-worked and worried. She came to me as usual at the rectory, but our lessons did not proceed as calmly as they were wont to do.

"I wish this visit was over," she said to me one morning, "I dare not express how I dread it, for Mademoiselle Kramer would imagine that I meant to fail in my performance—and that would half kill her. But these Italian people! the very idea of them terrifies me. It appears so like presumption to put myself in competition with them. Who will listen to my voice when they are present? and if you could but imagine, my dear Sir, how I dislike exhibiting before strangers! for my friends I could sing for ever; but for display only, I dread it."

I tried to reassure her, but she shed tears, and was totally unlike her own merry self. Was it a presentiment of evil that made her thus sad? The expected moment arrived—the prince and his *suite* were at the Abbey; all was festive gaiety. A concert was prepared for him that evening. I shall never forget my surprise at Rosalie's appearance. It had been the fashion to consider her almost ugly—I had never been of that opinion. Her eyes every one allowed were splendid, and her countenance was sweet; her complexion had always been the bane of her beauty, but when it was lighted up by colour, every feature appeared to soften, and many a time I looked at her, and inwardly predicted to myself, with a sigh of regret, that the time would arrive when Rosalie would be too beautiful for the situation she was to hold in life.

This evening Mademoiselle Kramer, assisted by Lady Gertrude, had taken peculiar pains with her *toilette*. Her long black hair was smoothed and plaited in a most becoming manner, and she wore

a pretty white dress, made by the direction of her anxious friend. Just as she was on the point of entering the drawing-room with the young ladies of the family, Fitz-Ernest called to her:

"Come into my sitting-room, Rosy," he said; she obeyed the summons with alacrity.

"Upon my word," he continued, "you look quite pretty;" and he turned her round and round, much to her amusement, although she blushed, and added to the prettiness which, for the first time, struck his eye. "See what I have got for a good girl. This is to bribe you to do your best and enchant every one, and make all the Signors and Signoras die with envy;" and at the same moment he put around her neck a beautiful gold chain, from which was suspended an ornament containing Lady Gertrude's hair.

Tears started into the eyes of the grateful child, and in an instant her arms were thrown round the neck of the young Lord, whom she embraced with all the innocence of the merest baby.

"Come, come," he said, laughing at this tender demonstration of her thanks, although he returned her caresses with brotherly tenderness, "we must have no scene, for your eyes will be red, and then what will become of your good looks? You know, Rosalie, your eyes are your fortune."

Rosalie had not known this before, but she remembered his saying for the future.

Lord Fitz-Ernest then led her into the music-room, and placed her by the side of his sister Gertrude. The varied emotions of joy and anxiety which agitated her bosom, had lent the brightest blood to her complexion, and when, at length, she took her place by the pianoforte, and accompanied by Mademoiselle Kramer, sang an Italian song, there was a general exclamation throughout the room of "What a beautiful child!"

The professional people were all delighted—astonished; real talent is always appreciated by those who themselves possess it. Her poor little head might have been turned by the excessive praise she received, but Rosalie fixed her eyes on the countenances of the Marchioness, Lady Gertrude, Fitz-Ernest, and then upon me; she saw that we were more than satisfied, and all the noisy flattery of the Italians fell valueless upon her ears.

There was one man amongst the set, who appeared peculiarly surprised and charmed with the voice and talent of Rosalie; he was the principal performer. At first, he imagined that she was one of the children of the house, but when he heard from Mademoiselle, her actual position in the family, his curiosity and admiration appeared to redouble. He listened to her with the utmost eagerness, and his questions with regard to her, were endless. He seemed to wish to know her whole history, and during his stay at Belmont made her sing to him repeatedly, trying her voice in every possible manner. Mademoiselle Kramer was in perfect raptures, and readily supplied him with every information he required.

There was something about this man that I never could endure. His countenance displayed a mixture of slyness and servility, although his manners were polished and fascinating, like those of most foreigners.

I was surprised one day, as I passed through the village, by seeing him come out of Mrs. Elton's cottage, and I fancied he looked confused when he encountered me; but with the usual ease of these foreign puppies, he promptly said: "*Qu'il venait d'entrer dans cette jolie maisonnette pour faire ses compléments à la mere de cette charmante petite, dont la belle voix l'avait tant ravi, et pour la*

feliciter sur les talents surprenants qu'elle annonçait."

"Intrusive puppy!" I muttered to myself, angry and disgusted—I scarce knew why.

The children of the family had always been very fond of theatrical amusements. To please them, their parents had fitted up a room as a small theatre, and during the long winter evenings this was the most favourite recreation. The exhibition had ever been restricted to their parents and intimate friends; but by some chance the existence of this little theatre was discovered by the Duke of ——. One of the characteristics of our Royal Family, is their excessive kindness towards young people, and their fondness for children. To give them pleasure as well as at the same time to gratify himself, His Royal Highness was most anxious and solicitous in his request, that he might witness a performance. How could a wish, which from such a quarter amounted to a command, be refused? The children were soon all in a state of happy excitement and preparation. Unfortunately, for her future prospects, our little heroine was the *Prima Donna* on every occasion, for she had an extraordinary talent for acting. The piece they selected, gave her an opportunity of introducing several of her most beautiful songs.

Although Rosalie's figure and appearance were not exactly suited to the characters they chose for her, still the advantages of dress, and the borrowed embellishments of which actors and actresses feel themselves entitled to make use, improved her beauty, and rendered her a very pretty, though certainly a *petite* performer. The exertions of the *corps dramatique* were crowned with the most perfect success. The Prince was peculiarly struck with the talent and grace of little Rosalie, and indeed the whole of the audience were unanimous in the expressions of their delight and praise; amongst them were the Italian singers. How was it that their praises sounded so harshly upon my ears, and that for the first time, in my own mind, I highly condemned an amusement which before I had even applauded and encouraged?

I was angry with myself, and felt that I had been guilty of impropriety, in not having, as the spiritual adviser of the family, checked it from the first—at least I ought not to have given the sanction of my countenance to a pastime so calculated to engender feelings of vanity and folly. I watched, with sensations of anger and disgust, the countenances of the foreigners, particularly that of Signor Gabrielli, who was my aversion.

His raptures at the acting of Rosalie were unbounded; he watched her every movement, and I heard him whispering in Italian continual remarks to one of his party who stood near him. "*Che voce divina!—quella ragazza sarebbe una vera gioia pel nostro teatro.*" Then he lowered his voice, and went on gesticulating with great vehemence and rapidity; and then his eyes were again fixed upon the little girl, who, excited by the success she had attained, was in the highest spirits—exerting herself to the very utmost to please.

I never before felt so little inclined to encourage her. I turned away from the scene, filled with feelings of dread and gloom, which I could scarcely fathom.

"Was this," I thought, "a proper education for a girl, whose prospects in life were to be so secluded—so quiet? Had we not taken her from her own sphere—dragged her, in a most unnecessary manner, before the public eye; would it not be a disadvantage to her, when appearing as she would do in a few years, in the grave character of a gov-

erness?" And then when I reflected upon some of the whispered hints of the Italian, I felt an inward thrill of vexation and fear.

My sweet little innocent child! surely her silly mother would never be induced to alter her views with regard to her, and allow her to fall into other hands than ours!

This idea was too disagreeable for me to cherish, and I endeavoured to banish it immediately; however, I felt much relieved when I saw the whole train depart, for there was something about the business that I certainly did not like. Whether I was afraid that the mind of my little girl would be distracted by all the fulsome praise she received, or that I had an instinctive dread of the Italian *coetterie*, I know not, but I remember that I drew my breath more freely when I found that they were all gone, and fondly imagined that the evil, with which some vague misgivings made me believe their presence was fraught, had departed with them.

CHAPTER IV.

A few mornings after these events had taken place, I received two letters—they both contained fatal tidings to me. I was no longer Curate of Fairbourne. The rector was dead, and the living (which, strange to say, did not belong to the Belmont family,) was to devolve into the hands of a person who intended to reside upon it. This event had ever been like the sword of Damocles hanging over my head; however, as the late incumbent was not an older man than myself, I had lived in the hope that I might be the first to depart, that I should have ended my days at that loved retreat, and have been buried under the peaceful shade of the yew trees which grew in sober luxuriance in the church-yard.

The latter part of my wish will, I trust still be realized. I then felt, (and have ever continued to do so,) that my ashes would never rest so gently in any other soil; and when I die there is a little cherished nook reserved for me in that beloved spot, which is now more than ever dear and sacred to my remembrance.

The other letter contained intelligence of the death of my aged mother. I was summoned to attend her funeral; my departure would be, therefore, much hastened; but as I was to go of what use would it have been to linger?

Shall I ever forget the grief of that brief period? I was perfectly bewildered by my own sorrow and that of those around me. As for poor Rosalie, the recollection of her despair will never leave my memory; it was indeed to her like losing a parent. I felt that she regarded me in that light, and towards her, dear soul, I truly felt the tenderest of parental affection.

I endeavoured to comfort her, promised to write to her—to return, if possible, to Fairbourne, and procure some habitation in the neighbourhood; still I could not soothe her: she clung round me, and could only falter out in broken accents—

"I know we shall never meet again—at least, not in such perfect comfort as we are now enjoying. I cannot help feeling that this is an end of every thing like happiness to me; the future seems to present itself to my mind with a frowning aspect—without you, where shall I look for that tender support, upon which I have so long, so com-

pletely, relied? It is to you, dear, kind friend, that I have looked up for advice—for instruction—ever since I have been in this happy village; but, when you are gone, what will become of me? I know, indeed, I feel a dire presentiment that all will go wrong with me—my mother will never remain at Fairbourne, and I shall be wretched. Indeed, lately she has alarmed me by hints which all tend to insinuate that our days here are numbered."

The whole of the day previous to my departure, Rosalie passed with me at the rectory, endeavouring to assist me in my preparations for my long journey; but, poor little girl, her eyes were too completely blinded by tears, and her hands shook with too much emotion, to allow her to be of any use. I see her now, in my mind's eye, in an attitude of deep dejection, seated by the writing table, trying to arrange my papers, but every now and then leaning her elbows upon the table and weeping bitterly. I was nearly as much overcome as herself, and with difficulty commanded my feelings sufficiently to be able to speak words of consolation—indeed I was thoroughly wretched. I felt that I was tearing myself away from the only spot on earth, and the only ties, besides those of kindred, which I had ever truly loved.

The evening being fine, I persuaded Rosalie to walk out with me; I thought the air would revive us both, and, indeed, I longed to visit, for the last time, some of my dearly loved haunts.

We walked for some time in silence, for we were far too unhappy to converse. My steps bent involuntarily towards the church-yard. I gazed with a parting look of affection upon the dear little edifice, where my best and most profitable hours had been spent. I looked around; my eyes rested upon the grave-stones, and I almost envied the peaceful ashes of many a well-known and respected parishioner. Whilst I was standing in one quiet retired nook, which was shaded by a magnificent yew tree, I said to my young companion, "Here, Rosalie, I hope to be buried; I have signified my wishes in my will."

She answered, "What happiness it would be to me, if I could imagine that my remains would meet with the same blessed fate! Make me but one promise, dear Sir!" she exclaimed, seizing my hand, and looking up imploringly in my face, whilst her large eyes swam in tears. "Promise me, that if I die before you quit this world, should you have it in your power to command the event, that you will endeavour to fulfil my earnest desire, that my body may also rest under this green sod. It would almost rob death of its most painful sting, to know that I should repose here, when all my troubles in this life are over!"

I looked at the little girl in surprise. These words were not in accordance with the usual joyous spirit of Rosalie: they grated on my ear as unnatural and prophetic. I, however, attributed them to the excitement of the moment, and endeavoured to soothe and comfort her to the best of my ability; but this was not to be accomplished, she could not be consoled.

It was so painful a period of my life, that, even now, I hate to dwell upon its recollection; it brings tears to my eyes, and tortures my very soul; it was the termination to the only really happy years I ever passed. Suffice it to say, that the next day I left my nest of peace, and many a sorrowing heart behind me; but now my subdued spirit endeavours to calm itself with the conviction that, although few indeed may be the lasting springs of joy which our Father in Heaven permits us here

to taste—still, in our way through this desert, it is His unseen hand that gently guides us through its troubles, to that home where our weary spirits will be at rest.

My narrative, from this period, must assume a different form, for I am not able to relate, as an eye-witness, all the details that follow; I have been assisted in my story, partly by what I have gathered from the relation of others, and partly by extracts from a journal written by Rosalie, which fell into my hands some time since. I was, however, an actor in many of the principal scenes, and, therefore, am my own historian in many instances.

I sometimes think that my friend, who urged me to present this story to the public, has been mistaken in the idea that it will interest all, equally with himself. He has seen and known many of the *dramatis personae* of the narrative. His personal interest has been excited, by hearing, from my own lips, the fond praises that their virtues have excited. But I must crave pardon of the gentle reader if I am tedious, and excuse myself by saying that I have not willingly intruded myself upon their notice.

CHAPTER V.

After my departure, I found that the whole village were sorrowing for my loss. Let not my readers deem me presumptuous or an egotist, for thus openly glorifying myself; so it was, and I cannot help feeling proud that I should have held such a place, in the hearts of so many kind and excellent people.

The Belmont family felt my absence in various ways: for besides having the honour and happiness of being considered by them in the light of a most intimate friend, I was the almoner to all their charities—the promoter and executor of all their views and desires with regard to the parish of Fairbourne. They thought it would be long, if indeed ever, before they could be on the same terms with the new incumbent.

But, of all the mourners, poor Rosalie was the saddest. Besides the grief of parting with me, who had loved her as a daughter, with much had the poor child to contend. Her mother had, for some time, appeared more than usually jealous of her visits to the Abbey; and almost immediately after my departure, dark hints were thrown out by her, that soon there would be an end of all that was now going forward.

She said that "Rosalie was not to suppose that she was always to go on leading the life of a fine lady, and to be entirely under the control of others—that she had different views for her, far more advantageous than those now offered to her. A governess, indeed! what would she get by that? It might do well enough for Rosalie individually, but it would be of little benefit to herself. "No," she added, "we must think of what will bring in the most money, for I am quite sick of living in such a dull, huffer-mugger manner in this stupid village!"

Rosalie looked at her mother with surprise, and shuddered, fearing—she knew not what. She also remarked that Mrs. Elton had lately been in the constant habit of receiving letters, which always appeared to throw her into an ecstasy of good humour. The poor child was miserable; her high spirits seemed to have completely flown.

"Rosalie," said Lady Gertrude, as she entered, with rapid steps and joyful countenance, the little boudoir, where she generally passed her leisure hours with her friend, "cheer up, I have delightful news for you; I have been talking to mamma, and she has given me leave to tell you, that you are to go with us to London."

Rosalie's colour, which had risen at the commencement of this speech, quickly faded away, and, with deep sadness in her voice, she said,

"Charming, indeed, Lady Gertrude, had I the least hope of its being realized; but of this there is not the slightest chance. My mother will never allow me to go with you."

"Oh! nonsense! Rosalie, you will see if I do not succeed; I shall go to Mrs. Elton, and not leave her, until I extort the permission we so much desire."

Rosalie still shook her head mournfully.

"You may go; the plan is too delightful for me to put any obstacle in the way of its accomplishment, but I am quite hopeless as to your success. I cannot imagine what is hanging over my head, like a dark cloud just ready to burst; but I am certain that my mother meditates some great change. Whatever it may be, I fear my days at Fairbourne are numbered; and if that be the case, farewell to all happiness!—my doom is sealed!"

"Do not indulge in such melancholy ideas, dear Rosalie," exclaimed Lady Gertrude, turning almost pale, as she listened to the dark forebodings of her loved companion; "we cannot afford to lose you, and we will keep you by main force, if necessary," she added, in a lively tone, in order, if possible, to dispel the gloom which had also taken hold of her own feelings. "We shall all be so happy in London. Only fancy the delight of your first visit to the Opera and the Ancient concert! How charmed you will be with them!—I expect we shall exist upon music this spring. I shall lose no time in going to your mother, so shall be off this moment," and she, lovely creature, tripped away with all the light-heartedness of youth, which draws every thing down to its own happy level. She felt certain that she must gain her point.

In a few moments she arrived at the white cottage, and there found the uninteresting mother of our Rosalie. As she passed the little parlour window, Lady Gertrude perceived that she was busily employed in writing a letter; and, to the quick eye of her young visitor, it was very evident that such an occupation was no slight effort. A dictionary was open before her, also a half worn-out Murray's grammar, into which Lady Gertrude believed she had been constantly peeping, during the course of her labours.

Although in her heart, Mrs. Elton disliked the Belmont family, she looked upon every member of it with a great degree of awe; even the children were *personnages* of great importance in her eyes. She, therefore, received Lady Gertrude with much overstrained civility and obsequiousness, and with many smiles and courtesies; but when she heard the object of her mission, her countenance altered—she looked perplexed and provoked.

"She was very sorry," she said, "but it was quite out of the question, totally impossible; her plans for Rosalie, and, indeed, for herself, had changed much of late; she was not at liberty at present to say what they were; she was under a promise of secrecy to a friend; it was her duty to do as much as she could to advance the fortunes of her child; the prospect which was now open to her, was a certain provision, therefore, although she was sorry to disoblige Lady Belmont, and Lady

Gertrude, still she really could not allow Rosalie to leave her just then, and, indeed," she added, putting on a very dismal ill-used countenance, "as it is, I have made many sacrifices for the sake of indulging that child; and when I think of the lonely miserable hours I have passed since I came to this village, I only wonder how I have so long endured it; and she all the time having nothing but pleasure and advantages from morning till night; it has been very fine for Rosalie, but very hard upon me—that every body must allow."

Lady Gertrude could scarcely command her patience; she felt so mortified and provoked; but, finding that she could make no impression upon this silly, obstinate woman, she left her, filled with deep regret at the failure of her scheme, and with all sorts of fears for the future destiny of her friend. Something there certainly was in view for Rosalie; and in such hands, Lady Gertrude feared indeed, that it could be nothing advantageous for her. However, with the kindness and judgment which directed all the actions of this sweet girl, remembering the excessive dejection of spirits under which Rosalie had laboured, ever since my departure, she determined not to make known to her the extent of her fears, and to soften Mrs. Elton's refusal as much as possible.

Our poor little heroine, from an open window, saw Lady Gertrude approach, and from her slow steps and languid air, immediately guessed that there was no hope for her. On Lady Gertrude's entering the apartment, the tears which fell from her eyes, (although she made a strong effort to check them,) confirmed her well-grounded fears.

Rosalie now had nothing left but to weep her regrets on the bosom of her friend, whose sorrow almost equalled her own.

Lady Gertrude seized the first opportunity of conferring with Lady Belmont upon the subject, and asking her advice. This kind mother was ever the repository of all the thoughts and wishes of her children.

She participated warmly in the interest which they all felt for Rosalie, but scarcely knew what to recommend, or what course to pursue! Mrs. Elton had certainly a right over the actions of her own child; but to satisfy the earnest entreaties of her daughter, although she felt almost an aversion to Mrs. Elton, for the vulgarity and vanity of her whole bearing, still, rather than see her Gertrude unhappy, she promised that she would herself solicit the boon so much desired—the society of Rosalie during their stay in London.

But even the Marchioness of Belmont was refused, and in a manner which precluded all hope of success.

"I have sent for you, Mademoiselle," said Lady Belmont, one morning soon after this event had taken place, to the German governess, "to talk to you upon the subject of our joint pet and protegee, poor Rosalie. Can you at all enlighten me as to her odious mother's views with regard to her?"

Mademoiselle Kramer, with much concern in her manner, mentioned her perfect ignorance upon the subject.

"En effet, Miladi," she continued, "c'est une femme si desagréable, si vulgaire, et en outre si suffisante, que pour moi, je l'évite autant que possible; elle ne merite pas de posséder une fille telle que notre amiable Rosalie."

"I agree with you perfectly, Mademoiselle; the poor child has been nurtured with such tenderness and kindness amongst us all, that she will break her heart if she is thrown into the society of vulgar, coarse-minded people. I sometimes fear, Made-

moiselle, that voice of hers, which we have been cultivating with such eagerness and pleasure, may prove her misfortune after all. Does it ever strike you that her mother intends to bring her out as a professional singer?"

Mademoiselle Kramer shook her head, with a very sorrowful expression, but was silent.

"The Marchioness proceeded:

"I should deplore such an event for many reasons; I should hate to see the dear little girl, who has been brought up like one of our own children, enter a life of such slavery and publicity—to say nothing of the little degree of respectability that attends the career of a public performer. However pure and excellent the individual may ever continue, the very associating, and being in continual contact with those whose reputation is tarnished, throws a cloud, a blight over the most innocent. Perhaps you may think me severe, but, with my ideas upon the subject, were Rosalie to embark in such a profession, under the guidance of so weak a mother, much as I love her, with my present opinions, I should no longer consider her a proper companion, still less a bosom-friend for my daughters; and to have such a barrier placed between them would make my gentle Gertrude truly unhappy. As a governess, although her life may be one of drudgery, and oftentimes of annoyance and *desagremens*, on the score of respectability, I deem it equal to every other; and though it may be a humbler vocation than theirs will be, still my children might ever have felt happy to call her their friend, although her fate had cast her in a more retired—more lowly sphere. I am sure, you know that such would be the case, dear Mademoiselle," continued Lady Belmont, "for I hope you are aware that we have no friend whom we more truly prize than yourself."

Mademoiselle, with glistening eyes, could only press the kind hand which was held out to her. She could not speak; her heart was full of love and gratitude towards her noble patroness, mingled with sorrow and care for the future prospects of her loved young pupil.

The day at length was fixed for the departure of the family. Poor Rosalie drooped like a little fading flower. Even her voice seemed gone; she could not bring forth a single note to gratify the Marquis with a parting song. If she could have felt comforted, it would have been by all the kindness of this charming family.

Lady Belmont, the day previous to leaving the Abbey, called her into her dressing-room, and, after making her some useful and valuable presents of dress and books, said, in the most soothing accents:—

"My dear Rosalie, you are aware that you owe a paramount duty to your mother, and, of course, her will must be your law; but remember that I shall always be your friend, and ever ready to serve you to the extent of my power; so will the Marquis, and every member of our family. As for Gertrude, you know how much she loves you; therefore, do not give way to so much sorrow my love. We have often parted before, and met again in happiness."

"There is no more happiness for me!" exclaimed Rosalie, as she knelt before the Marchioness, and buried her face on her knees; but, dear Lady, believe me when I say, that whatever is destined to be the fate of the poor little girl your bounty and kindness have so long made the happiest of the happy—the remembrance of your generosity, your angelic goodness, will be the only bright thought—the stay of her existence."

After a short pause, which was not interrupted by Lady Belmont, (for the agitation of Rosalie had communicated itself to her own kind heart,) she continued, looking up with clasped hands and streaming eyes:

"And I feel that the aspect of my destiny is indeed about to alter, oh! so sadly alter; do not forget me, dear kind friend, think of me with indulgence, whatever may be my fate; for however far I may be removed from you all, I shall ever remain the same in heart; the precepts I have learnt, whilst blessed by living under your influence, will preserve me virtuous, although I may be debarred, for the future, from the happiness of being with you."

Lady Belmont was much affected; she raised her in her arms, and affectionately kissed the poor girl, then, leading her into the school-room, she gave her into the charge of Mademoiselle Kramer, one of her most devoted friends, requesting that she would endeavour to calm her, before she again joined Lady Gertrude, who was almost as miserable as herself.

However much we may wish to retard the dreaded moment of an impending and certain event, it will at length appear; in vain we weep over the expectation of its arrival, and fondly struggle to retain our present happiness a little longer. The blow will fall. The wretched moment had indeed arrived to poor Rosalie, for the Belmont family were gone, and she was left in lonely misery.

CHAPTER VI.

From the moment of the departure of the family, Rosalie perceived that her mother was in a most extraordinary state of preparation and excitement. Her wardrobe seemed to be undergoing a complete investigation, repair, and embellishment. Some disclosure was constantly on her lips, which it cost her much difficulty to restrain. Many a faded, and once smart dress, which had not seen the light of day for years, was taken from its place of obscurity, and the village mantua-maker's powers were put into requisition, to remodel it, if possible, according to the prevailing fashion.

Rosalie was often called upon to be umpire upon some matter of taste, and to decide whether a pink or a blue riband was the most becoming to the still handsome face of her mother, as a cap was about to be manufactured after the pattern she had borrowed from one of the Abbey lady's maids.

Our heroine was all amazement at what she saw, but she was so unhappy at the moment that she felt glad her mother had any subject to amuse her mind, and draw her attention from herself, thus enabling her to pass most of her time in the dear school-room at the Abbey.

During the absence of the family, this apartment was left open for her use. She always found a bright fire burning in the grate, and books and music, by which means she could pursue her studies, without interruption.

This was the only comfort which now remained to her, and it was with reluctance that she could tear herself away from this delightful solitude.

One day, on her return home, she saw that something unusual had occurred; both Mrs. Elton and the servant were bustling about in all directions, full of business and preparation. The moment her mo-

ther perceived Rosalie she exclaimed: "What a time you have been away this morning, child, I have been wanting you for a thousand different things; perhaps you are not aware," she continued, seating herself, looking very much heated by her exertions, and assuming a very consequential and mysterious air, "that I have for some time been expecting a visitor, and this morning's post brought me a letter, which intimates that he will be here to-night."

"A visitor!" exclaimed Rosalie, in surprise. "Who can it be?"

And her heart beat violently, and her colour rose; for a moment she thought it might be myself, and that my return was expected as a joyful surprise to her.

"The gentleman who is to arrive," resumed her mother, "you have before seen, and a charming person he is; much will his society enliven our solitude. Indeed," she continued, looking down, and putting on an air of almost maiden bashfulness, "I trust we shall make him so happy, that he will be in no haste to leave us."

Again the thought flashed across Rosalie's mind, that it might be Fitz-Ernest, or one of his brothers, who had promised to pass a day with them at the cottage, which they had once or twice before done, during the absence of the rest of the family.

"Pray, mamma, tell me who it is," she exclaimed, impatiently.

"You recollect that delightful gentleman who was here in the autumn, during the Duke's stay at the Abbey, who was so kind and condescending as to notice you, Rosalie, and who did you the great honour of admiring your singing?"

"But which gentleman?" asked Rosalie, for praise, she remembered, had issued from more than one pair of lips; at that time it flowed universally.

"Why, to tell you the truth," continued Mrs. Elton, "although the proud Marchioness did not vouchsafe to ask me to the Abbey during that period—which I always considered extremely rude—I was still fortunate enough, through the excessive politeness and attention of one of the party, to receive some courtesy, which I think was only due to me, considering that I was the mother of the girl who was entertaining all the company. This polite gentleman visited me frequently; and most insinuating and delightful I found him."

"But who was it, mamma? Pray, pray, tell me."

"I wonder you are so stupid as not to be able to guess at once—Signor Gabrielli, of course, that delightful, accomplished creature."

"What, that dark-looking, odious foreigner, whom dear Mr. Leslie used to dislike so very much? Oh, mamma! I hope you are only joking!"

Mrs. Elton looked most violently offended.

"Joking, indeed, Miss Rosalie, I see no joke in the matter, and I think you are extremely impertinent thus to speak of a person to whom I am so much attached. Mr. Leslie, indeed! pretty notions to put into your head. I suppose he only admires those who are like his own prim self. He is not my pattern, I can tell you. You had better take care what you are about. You little know what is going to happen. You must be prepared to look up to Signor Gabrielli with respect; aye, and with obedience also: and now, Miss, be so good as to go and assist Johnson in preparing for our supper to-night. You've been ruined and spoiled by those proud people at the Abbey; I can tell you, you must lower yourself a peg or two if you please, before you are to get on, in the future life you are about to lead; pray leave your pride behind, with

all your lords and ladies; it will no longer be of any use to you."

Rosalie, frightened by her mother's anger and vehemence, burst into tears, and left the room immediately. She hastened to seek Johnson, the maid, of whom I believe I have already made mention as a sensible, good woman; she found her busy in her preparations for a supper.

"Good heavens, Johnson!" cried Rosalie, as pale and trembling she stood before her, "what does all this mean? Can you enlighten me as to the purport of my mother's fearful words, and the arrival of this odious Italian?"

"My dear child," replied Johnson, shaking her head, and looking very much annoyed, "I have long expected this; but, until I was quite certain, I thought I had better not torment you with my fears."

"To what does all this lead?" cried poor Rosalie, in an agony of terror.

"Well," said Johnson, lowering her voice, "ever since that man paid so many long visits here, during the Duke's stay at the Abbey, your mother has had letters from him constantly; and, as far as I can discover, from the hints she has thrown out, and the various arrangements she has made, she is really going to marry him."

At this moment Johnson cast her eyes upon Rosalie, whose pallid cheeks and closing eyes showed that she was on the point of fainting. She took her into her arms and endeavoured to restore her.

"Poor dear child," she ejaculated, as she bathed her forehead and chafed her cold hands, "I feared it would be thus; but what could I do? There was no time left for me to break the news gently to her; the man will be here so very soon!"

Poor Rosalie was indeed in a dreadful state of agitation. With the idea of her mother's marriage, the whole train of her future wretched course of existence exhibited itself to her view. To live eternally in the society, in the power of that man, whose odious manners and sinister countenance had disgusted, not only herself, but all those whose opinions she most valued—what degradation! what misery! She was in such a state of despair that her sobs were uncontrollable; not all the scoldings of her mother, who was attracted to the spot, by the audible sounds of her sorrow, nor the tender soothings of her nurse, had any power to calm her. They were obliged, at length, to give up the point; and Mrs. Elton, in great anger, and with much reluctance, was forced to allow Johnson to undress her and assist her into her bed, where she lay, poor child, subdued and overwhelmed with unavailing grief.

In the mean time, her mother was in all the delights of expectation, equipped in her regenerated finery. Signor Gabrielli at last arrived. Rosalie's absence gave them an opportunity of settling their future plans undisturbed; and, in the course of a long conversation between this worthy pair, the fate of our heroine was decided. Every thing was arranged for Mrs. Elton's immediate marriage with the Italian.

To enlighten my readers as to the origin of an event, which may, perhaps, cause them some surprise, it will be necessary to state the reasons which induced Signor Gabrielli thus to encumber himself with this silly, penniless widow.

Rosalie's extraordinary talents had made the deepest impression upon his mind; in addition to the many other bad qualities, which he possessed, he was of a most sordid, avaricious turn. In the little girl he at once discovered a mine of wealth.

He had lately accepted an engagement at one of the theatres in Italy.

Calculating and cautious in the extreme, he considered that the easiest, and even the cheapest manner of getting her completely into his hands, would be by marrying Mrs. Elton. He was penetrating and shrewd, and gathered sufficient information, from what he saw and heard, to be aware, that by no other means could he detach Rosalie from the Belmont family, by whom she was so much beloved. He gained from Mademoiselle Kramer what were the views they had long settled with regard to her future life. He knew how powerful would be their influence—how fastidious, probably, were their ideas; in short, the only certain and legitimate mode of possessing a complete dominion over her, would be to entail upon himself the encumbrance of taking a wife in the person of her mother. He shrugged up his shoulders, took a large pinch of snuff, and was for a few minutes irresolute. "*Che Diavolo!*" there is no good without a mixture of evil," thought he. However, Mrs. Elton was still a handsome woman, and such a fool, that he might easily bend her to all his wishes. To gain her consent was an affair soon and easily accomplished. As I have before said, she was heartily sick of the retirement in which she lived, and the idea of exchanging it, for the delights of Italy, was indeed charming, to say nothing of the companion that was ensured to her—one whom she considered a most handsome specimen of a man. His black bushy locks, and enormous whiskers were very imposing to her ideas; and she looked with admiration upon his hands, which, although constantly begrimed with snuff, were covered with sparkling rings, which she longed to transfer to her own taper fingers.

She had, however, sufficient cunning, to know that the business had better be kept as quiet as possible, till nearer the period of its completion, for she foresaw great opposition to Rosalie's departure, both from herself, and the Belmont family, and well knew that it would nearly break the heart of her poor child. This knowledge, however, did not for a moment make her hesitate to immolate that child on the shrine of her own selfish desires.

On the night of Gabrielli's arrival at the white cottage, every final arrangement was made; as soon as the marriage had taken place they were to set off, without farther delay, to Italy. A year or two of *intense* labour, Gabrielli assured Mrs. Elton, would render her daughter quite capable of becoming Prima Donna of the Italian Opera in London—that is to say, if she would only grow a little taller; and nothing could be so favourable to that desired end, as a residence in the warm climate of Italy; for considering the "*statura magnifica della signora madre*," he saw no reason, why her daughter should not inherit such an advantage.

From the success of such a scheme, what riches would pour forth! The Italian's eyes glistened, and his smile was sardonic, as in his mind's eye he calculated the treasures that he intended to accumulate through the means of this poor fragile child; and Mrs. Elton viewing the perspective loaded with new caps and dresses, gossip, and tea parties, joined in this feeling of exultation which beamed from the countenance of her intended.

In order that the marriage might take place with as little publicity as possible, it was arranged that in the course of a fortnight, which would just give Mrs. Elton time to dispose of her little property at Fairbourne, she should, accompanied by Rosalie, join him in London, when, immediately after the wedding, they might commence their continental expedition.

Mrs. Elton found that she had a much more difficult task to accomplish, with regard to Rosalie, than she had anticipated; she had imagined, that she would be all meekness and submission; but in the breast of Rosalie lay hitherto dormant the strongest feelings. They had scarcely, as yet, been excited, for the last five years of her short life had passed in tranquil happiness; she had been nurtured by praise and tenderness—in a degree almost spoilt. I confess, with sadness, for my part, that I had the greatest share in over-indulging her; but there was something about the child so sweet, so endearing, that never had I tried her temper by one harsh word.

The next morning found our poor heroine in a state of indignant agony and distress; her spirit had not yet been subdued by sorrow, and she rebelled against her present trial. Life, she beheld for the first time in all its gloom; a dark cloud seemed to hang over it. It is but too true, that the present constitution of human nature cannot bear uninterrupted prosperity, without being in a degree enervated by it. The poisonous weeds, which spring up in that too luxurious soil, require the hand of adversity to extirpate them; it is the experience of sorrow and distress that subdues the arrogance of our nature, and softens the innate selfishness of our hearts. Rosalie Elton hid her face upon the pillow and wept; she *would* not leave her room; nothing could induce her to meet the odious man whom, her mother told her, she must henceforth reverence as a father.

From threats and scolding, Mrs. Elton was obliged at last to have recourse to entreaties that she would get up, and receive Signor Gabrielli with a cheerful countenance, but Rosalie was inflexible. At length her mother, in extreme anger and perplexity, with a very bad grace, gave way to her wishes, and dissembling her own feelings, made it appear to her future lord and master, that continued illness had confined Rosalie to her chamber. Gabrielli was provoked at this intelligence; he longed again to hear her sing, to feast his eyes upon the casket, from whence was to proceed such future treasures!

Fortunately for poor Rosalie the next day the Italian was obliged to depart. After he was gone, Johnson prevailed upon her to get up and be dressed. This good soul was shocked with the alteration which so short a space of grief had made in the countenance of her dear child. There now appeared upon it a fixed, and almost a sullen gloom. She had ceased to weep, but she spoke not.

Her mother endeavoured to make some impression upon her, by scolding her violently; but she soon saw that was not the way to move her; she then changed her tone to coaxing, and expatiated upon the advantages and delight of a journey to Italy. She spoke loudly in praise of the "charming man," who was soon to be so closely allied to them; but all she said only redoubled the agony which plainly showed itself upon the expressive features of Rosalie, and she generally concluded by abusing her as an unnatural, stubborn, ungrateful girl, "who had no feeling for her own flesh and blood."

I suppose the torture of mind the poor child endured at this time cannot be described. She had not sufficient experience in misery, to fly to the only consolation which was offered to her—prayers and supplications to Heaven for support; she had not yet looked up to heaven as a refuge, and, finding all on earth unstable—inconstant, she had yet to turn in the helplessness of misery to Him, whose

ears are ever open to the prayer of the sorrowful. At that moment she had but one feeling—a burning anxiety to be with some of us. Had she known where I was, she would have sought me without delay, but she was ignorant of the actual place of my destination.

I have heard from Johnson, who supplied me with many of the details of my story, that for several days succeeding the events I have just recorded, she always found her, after long absences from the cottage, in the church-yard, seated on a gravestone, close to the spot we had fixed upon as our mutual burial-place. She was never weeping, but there was a fixed and rigid expression in her countenance which told of an inward conflict, that must have been agonizing to endure.

In the mean time, Mrs. Elton went on in joyful preparation for their departure; at intervals, however, much irritated by the continued and alarming depression of her daughter and also by the evident disinclination which Johnson evinced to the change in their prospects. The latter had been a devoted servant to Mrs. Elton; for, although she plainly saw the foibles of her mistress, for whom she could not feel much respect—still, the love she bore the child she had nursed from its infancy, made her endure every inconvenience, and all the folly and occasionally ill-humour of the mother, rather than lose sight of that dear nursing over whom she had so long watched. She did not scruple to express her opinion openly upon the subject of the approaching marriage; and so unlimited was her censure, that had not Mrs. Elton known how necessary she was to her comfort, she would, probably have highly resented the freedom.

The time wore on rapidly, and there were but two days intervening before the one that was fixed for their departure for London.

What a moment for Rosalie! "Must I then leave thee, Paradise!" well might she have exclaimed, when she looked round upon the smiling scene, which she was about to quit, she sadly feared forever.

CHAPTER VII.

It was late in the evening, and Rosalie, who had been absent all the morning, had not yet returned. Mrs. Elton and Johnson had been so much engaged during the day, that her non-appearance passed unheeded by them. The latter knew that at the Abbey she would be well cared for. She was a general favourite there, and the old housekeeper was as anxious about her as if she had been her own child; she overwhelmed her with attentions, particularly now that she saw her low spirited and suffering. Many a cup of warm jelly or nourishing broth, she endeavoured to force upon the languid-looking girl. Rosalie, to please her, tried sometimes to swallow a small portion of the dainties which the good woman had prepared with her own hands—but her appetite had completely failed her.

This evening, as I have before said, Rosalie returned not to her home;—it grew dark, and still she did not appear.

Johnson became very anxious, and her mother expressed what she felt, by abusing her—as usual.

"What a tiresome, headstrong girl she has become," she muttered; "always giving so much trouble," she added, as she saw Johnson leave her

packing, and about to depart in search of her. "We shall find her, I fear, a great plague; I wish I had never settled myself at Fairbourne—she has been quite ruined by the people here."

In the mean time, Johnson sought the Abbey with rapid steps.

"Mrs. Smith!" she exclaimed, as she entered the housekeeper's room, "of course, Miss Rosalie is here?" But Mrs. Smith assured her that she had not been seen at the Abbey that day!

"Indeed," continued the good woman, "I have had some chicken broth by the side of my fire ever since the morning, and some nice thin biscuits, to tempt the dear child to take a little nourishment; I have been quite vexed that she did not come."

Johnson's heart sank within her; but she instantly set out, accompanied by several of the servants, to search for Rosalie in every direction—no trace of her was to be discovered. All her usual haunts were explored in vain; and after hours of fruitless endeavours to find her lost child, poor Johnson returned home half distracted, with apprehension and distress.

Mrs. Elton was now in good earnest alarmed. The morning dawned, but no Rosalie appeared. In her present dilemma she thought it best to write to Gabrielli for the assistance of his advice. Even with all her conceit and ignorance, she had sufficient penetration to be aware that she should fall very short in the estimation of her admirer, if she did not bring with her a rich dowry, in the person of her talented child.

But where was Rosalie all this time? Let us leave for a short space the inhabitants of the white cottage in all their alarm and consternation, and follow her footsteps. The day on which she was missed from Fairbourne, she had risen from her bed with a heart more than usually heavy; a sleepless night had added to the misery of her feelings, and the idea of the near approach of her departure, which was to be the commencement of her new and dreaded career, presented itself to her imagination with redoubled horror. She dressed herself hastily, and sought the fresh air; she imagined that her griefs would feel lighter under its refreshing influence. Towards the rectory she bent her steps, the first time for many a day; although the church-yard had been her favourite haunt, she always sedulously turned her eyes from encountering objects, the sight of which would recall scenes of such past happiness, that, now heart-stricken as she was, she could not view without torture. But still she must once more look upon it, and breathe a long—a last farewell; she dared not enter the gates; the new rector had taken possession of the place, and she was in no mood to encounter strangers.

Poor Rosalie! She leant over the palings, and strained her tearful eyes by gazing upon the well-beloved spot. How fragrant was the perfume of the air, which wafted over so many of my cherished plants. A shower had just fallen—every thing was fresh and green with the early tint of spring. The last spring!—how happy was she then! We were both busy with some new flower beds; there they were in rich luxuriance, and the bright colours of the plants were now blossoming for others!

What a tale of happiness did every feature of the place recall! The open window which disclosed the interior of the little study. Oh! how she longed to see my countenance looking from it, to greet her, as it had ever been wont to do, with the most affectionate smile of welcome! Now all was cold—silent as the grave. Long did the poor girl remain rapt in all the misery of painful contempla-

tion, and only left with slow and lingering steps on perceiving some of the present occupants approaching.

She turned at once into the park, and soon found herself in the flower garden. Here her recollections were not less agonizing. "Oh! Gertrude! Gertrude!" she exclaimed, as every object associated with the image of her sweet friend met her eye; "what would I give to behold you once more!—I must—I really must see you. I have not even heard from you lately. What is the cause of your silence? I cannot continue to exist without seeing you if it is but for one short hour!—cost what it may—I will go to you!"

At this moment, a thought had darted across her mind. She remembered that a London coach passed through the village every day, at twelve o'clock.

"I will go to them," she continued; "I can endure this load of wretchedness no longer without advice—with no one to tell me what I really ought to do. If they assure me that my path of duty is to submit, I will endeavour to do so; but from their lips must I hear my doom pronounced. Oh! dear Mr. Leslie where are you?—why do you hide yourself from your poor little Rosalie? Why are you not here to direct my steps?—to teach me to bow with submission to the trials that await me? Until I see you, my heart will remain rebellious—wrong as it may be."

She reflected for an instant, and then hastily returned to the cottage, where, unheeded by her mother or Johnson, she deliberately made up a small parcel, and taking with her a purse, which the kindness of Lady Belmont had well filled, again sallied forth. She knew that in the course of an hour the coach would overtake her; it stopped to water the horses at a small public house on the road-side, there she requested to be taken up, and in a very few minutes was rolling rapidly on towards London.

It was a long and fatiguing journey, for the coach did not arrive at its place of destination until the next morning; but the excitement of Rosalie's mind was so great that she felt it not. Her sensations were of a mixed nature, but those of relief and almost joy predominated. To feel that she should so soon be with her beloved friends, was exquisite delight; still the remembrance of having so abruptly left her mother, caused a shadow to fall over the brightness of the prospect.

Fortunately for Rosalie, her only travelling companion was an old lady, who seemed to take a great fancy to our heroine, and perceiving how pale and exhausted she looked, insisted upon her taking some refreshment; and when they stopped at the Borough, she kindly saw her into a coach, giving at the same time, instructions to the driver to proceed to the mansion of Lord Belmont, which was in Picadilly.

How long appeared the distance, until she reached the haven for which she panted! She was frightened and bewildered by this her first introduction to the bustling, noisy city of London. At length she was before the doors of Belmont House; she saw the well-known livery, and many a well-remembered face amongst the servants; she sprang from the coach, and was soon in the arms of her dear Lady Gertrude; there she felt safe, and for a moment all her former wretchedness was forgotten.

The surprise of the family on seeing Rosalie was very great; and when they heard her story, they were indeed perplexed, and much concerned: none of the letters which she had written to them upon

the subject had been received, and Rosalie now felt convinced that her mother had intercepted her correspondence, for she discovered that they had been equally astonished, at not having heard from her, in answer to the many letters that had been despatched to Fairbourn.

Her kind friends soon perceived, that, after the first glow which happiness spread over her countenance, had faded away, she was in a most exhausted and uncomfortable state; indeed, when she had stated every circumstance of her present position, the colour gradually left her cheeks, and a succession of fainting fits, alarmed and distressed all those around her. She was carried to her bed, from which she was unable to move for weeks, as her life was in great danger, from the effects of a nervous fever.

In the mean time, Lady Belmont felt that she was placed in a very embarrassing situation. Truly did she compassionate the fate of Rosalie, and to avert the evils which menaced her, she was ready to make every exertion; but she foresaw every description of difficulty. I was summoned immediately to assist the family with the aid of my advice, and I found my poor little *protegee* in a most lamentable state, both of mind and body.

How kind! how liberal were the views of all the Belmonts with regard to her. I can never forget the impression it made upon my mind, and the admiration which not only this trait in their characters excited, but I may also say, the constant tenor of their benevolent lives. They did, indeed, shed light and lustre over the sphere in which they moved. Rich is their reward in this life, in peace of conscience, in the approval of the wise and good; but glorious and transcendent will be their lot, we must humbly hope, in Heaven, on that day when the Lord "maketh up his jewels."

The Marchioness had immediately written to Mrs. Elton, to inform her of the unexpected arrival of Rosalie; but no answer did she receive to this communication, until one morning Signor Gabrielli was announced, and requested to have a private interview with Lady Belmont. This, however, she declined, insisting that I should be present during the audience. The odious creature was then admitted. He was, as usual, all bows and servility; and with much theatrical gesticulation, said that he had come "*de la part de sa chere epouse*," to claim her daughter, as they were on the point of leaving England for the continent. Lady Belmont told him that her removal was at present quite impossible, on account of her severe illness, but that Madame Gabrielli should have free access to her, whenever she wished to see her; and strongly recommended that Johnson should be sent immediately, as she, of course, would be a comfort to the invalid.

She then stated her wishes and views with regard to Rosalie, which were most kind and liberal.

She said that, in the event of Madame Gabrielli's consenting to give up Rosalie to their care, Lord Belmont and herself would enter into an agreement with them, engaging to provide amply for her, and that every care should be taken to advance her in respectability and happiness.

The subtle Italian, through all his endeavours to disguise his feelings, was evidently perplexed and enraged at this proposal, so difficult to reject from its extreme eligibility with regard to Rosalie.

He talked a great deal about the tender heart of his *cariissima sposa*, and the extreme attachment she felt towards her child, all of which he knew was a mere *façon de parler*; however he said he

would consult with her, although he feared she never would consent to the very generous and noble offer of Madame la Marquise.

We at once foresaw that such would be the case, for it was easy to perceive that the cupidity of the man was excited, and that it was in order to make money by the poor girl, that he was so anxious to keep her firmly within his clutches.

Oh! how I wished for riches! for I believe, had I possessed them, I should have bribed the man at any price, rather than sacrifice her to such a wretch, and to a future existence, which would be to her, constituted as I knew her to be, misery itself.

Lady Gertrude and I used to converse for hours upon the subject, but we could not inspire each other with anything like hope.

A letter arrived from Madame Gabrielli evidently not composed by herself. It was a mixture of servility and impertinence; but its purport was to express, that no power on earth, nor offers of any description, would induce her to give up her child; she hinted that no one else had any right over the actions of Rosalie but herself, and as her mother she commanded her to return to her, the very moment she was able to leave her room, since already Signor Gabrielli's plans had been seriously deranged by her inconvenient illness. She wished for no other communication upon the subject from any quarter, as her decision was irrevocably made; and therefore, it was utterly useless for any one to attempt to alter her fixed determination. She concluded this composition by some overstrained expressions of gratitude to the Marchioness, which did not accord very harmoniously with the other part of her epistle—and thus ended our hopes.

It was a sad task to communicate this intelligence to poor Rosalie, who was slowly recovering, but still I was obliged to do so. I found the only path I had now to pursue was not uselessly to console with her, but to endeavour to strengthen her mind to enable her to bear her misfortunes with fortitude. As she lay, poor little girl, on the sofa, pale and exhausted, from both mental and bodily sufferings, I talked to her seriously and firmly.

I besought her to cling for support to Him from whom alone it could proceed; which was the only means of enabling her to look calmly upon the evils that threatened the future. I tried to enforce upon her mind that the defence which religion provides is indeed a "shield and buckler," which the Almighty spreads before the believer, to cover him "from the terror of night, and the arrow that flieth by day;" when the time of trouble comes—and come it must to all—that it places the virtuous under the pavilion of the Almighty, by affording them that relief which arises from the belief of the divine protection; it opens to them sources of consolation, which are hidden from others, by the additional strength of mind with which it endows them; it sets them upon a rock, against which the tempest may beat, but which it cannot shake. The eye of God dwells equally upon the lonely dwelling and on the palace of a king; every pang of sympathy, every labour of love, every feeling of submission—is known to Him; every privation patiently endured, every virtue humbly exercised, He can abundantly recompense; the meanest of his servants is dear and valuable in His gracious sight, and many a name unknown or persecuted on earth will be found written by His merciful hand in the book of life.

She always listened to me, dear child, with earnest attention; my words sank deep into her heart,

and with God's assistance had their due effect. Her mind became gradually fortified against the events of this inconstant state; higher prospects arose before her mind, and I trust she was in a measure prepared for future storms. Her reflections were now such, that "to the upright make light arise in darkness," and she endeavoured, with all the fervency of her soul, to cast her cares upon her Father in heaven, humbly trusting that he would indeed care for her.

I could not but agree with her that her prospects were very gloomy, and that she would have extreme difficulties to encounter. We did not conceal from her the projects of the Gabriellis, and she was informed that most likely they intended, that she should become an actress. We opened her eyes to the certainty of her having to mix in society which would be repugnant to every feeling; but still, we assured her, even through that very ordeal she might pass scatheless, if she held fast the principles which had been so constantly inculcated in her mind. Assisted by the compassionate mercy of the Almighty, she need never feel herself abandoned or unprotected, left in this vale of tears, to bear solitary and alone her woes. In her dark, as well as her brightest hours, God would be with her; His influence cheer her in the saddest moments, it would accompany her steps to the most distant regions of the earth. Should she be separated from all those she loved, exiled to a foreign land, even there "the hand of God would hold her, and his right hand guide her."

But, although my lips uttered words of support and comfort, my heart sunk with dread when I considered her sad fate. On making inquiries into the character of Gabrielli, we found that he was a man noted for the profligacy of his habits. "How," thought I, "can Lady Belmont, with her virtuous, and fastidious notions upon the subject of female propriety, countenance for the future, any degree of intimacy between her pure, and high-born children, and the daughter-in-law of such a person as the Italian?"

The more I reflected upon the subject, the more hopeless it appeared; and when the parting moment arrived, and we had to relinquish the poor girl into the hands of her—I can only term them executioners—I felt that it was like hurling her at once into the pit of destruction.

CHAPTER VII.

I shall never forget the thoughtful kindness with which the young men of the family treated our heroine during this period. I had not before seen Rosalie so attractive as regards personal appearance, for during this brief space of sorrow, she seemed to have advanced in years in womanly beauty. The character of her countenance had entirely changed: from the laughing child, she had become the sorrowing Madonna; her complexion pale and clear—her large eyes drooping, and their long dark lashes too often moist with tears. I was now certain that my prediction would be verified, and that her loveliness would daily increase to transcendent beauty.

Fitz-Ernest and his brothers had free ingress to their sister's dressing-room, and there they ever assisted the sweet Gertrude in trying to soothe the stricken girl.

Fitz-Ernest, who naturally possessed a seri-

turn of disposition, aided me to strengthen her mind, by inculcating ideas of submission, indeed of obedience, for we foresaw that her life would be truly one of hardship—cruelty even we imagined, might be exercised towards her by the unprincipled being to whose dominion she would have henceforth to yield; for we heard that, in addition to his imperfections, he was of a furious and ungovernable temper.

Lord Henry, the second son, more volatile and light-hearted than his brother, tried to laugh away her grief.

"Never mind, Rosy," he would say, "after all you will be Prima Donna of the Italian Opera, and no bad thing, let me tell you; and if you go on improving as you have done lately, what with those lustrous eyes and that voice, which you know, even in your worst days, we always considered like that of a Siren, you will no longer be the Coal Black Rose, but the Bella Bellissima Rosa. You will have all the men in London at your feet. You will be half smothered with garlands and bouquets that will be showered upon you, from every box in the Opera, and your jewel-case will not be large enough to contain the presents which will pour from all quarters. I shall be quite proud of you, Rosalie."

Rosalie turned away, shuddering, from such consolation; but Fitz-Ernest had the power to soothe her wounded feelings. His manners were mild and persuasive; his voice full of pathos and sweetness. Most thoughtful were the proofs he gave of his anxiety for the amelioration of her lot, and to provide, in some measure, for her future comfort. One of the most substantial and valuable, was ensuring to her the attendance of her faithful Johnson. The poor woman arrived one day in great despair; she brought the sad tidings to the unhappy girl, that the night before she had received her dismissal from Gabrielli. Had she only considered her own advantage and comfort, it would have been far better for her to have relinquished a service now rendered irksome and disagreeable in the extreme, from the character and habits of the master she had acquired; but she knew that to Rosalie her departure must be most fatal—most injurious; she anticipated for this loved child, nothing but privations, inconveniences and misery. She felt that she had it in her power to assist and comfort her in a hundred different ways; and this devoted creature would rather have begged her way to Italy, than have quitted her for ever.

Fitz-Ernest heard the circumstance, and without saying a word of his intentions, hastily left the house; he ascertained, from the porter, where Gabrielli was to be found, and ordering his cab, soon found himself in that part of the town so ably portrayed by an inimitable author; it is so descriptive, that I cannot forbear inserting it here:

"Although a few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in any body's way to or from any where. It is one of the squares that have been; a quarter of the town that has gone down in the world, and taken to letting lodgings. Many of its first and second floors are let furnished to single gentlemen, and it takes boarders besides. It is a great resort of foreigners.

"The dark complexioned men, who wear large rings, and heavy watch-guards, and bushy whiskers, and who congregate under the Opera colonnade, and about the box-office in the season, between four and five in the afternoon, when Mr. Seguin gives away the orders—all live in Golden Square, or within a street of it. Two or three violins, and

a wind instrument from the Opera band, reside within its precincts. Its boarding-houses are musical, and the notes of pianos, and harps float in the evening time round the head of the mournful statue—the guardian genius of a little wilderness of shrubs, in the centre of the square. On a summer's night, windows are thrown open, and groups of swarthy moustachio'd men are seen by the passer-by, lounging at the casements, and smoking fearfully. Sounds of gruff voices practising vocal music invade the evening's silence, and the fumes of choice tobacco scent the air. There snuff and cigars, and German pipes and flutes, and violins, and violoncellos, divide supremacy between them. It is the region of song and smoke. Street bands are on their mettle in Golden Square, and itinerant glee-singers quaver involuntarily, as they raise their voices within its boundaries."

Fitz-Ernest easily discovered in this quarter, the abode of the Gabriellis. He was ushered up to a first floor, where he found Madame Gabrielli alone. The air of discomfort which pervaded the room, and her own altered appearance, were a strange contrast to the neat clean little parlour in which he had always seen her formerly, and the decent propriety of dress, which she used to wear at Fairbourne. Now there was an evident attempt at finery—at youthfulness of appearance. She was seated on a dirty faded sofa, her head adorned with a cap that had already become begrimed by the dirt and smoke of London; but which was ornamented with tawdry coloured ribands. Her hair had evidently been tortured by vain attempts to make it fall in ringlets; her person was attired in a silk dress, very short, and very scanty, but still it was silk, and Madame Gabrielli considered that a great improvement on her neat, clean Fairbourne cotton dresses; her feet had been most certainly equipped from a *ready made* shop in Cranbourne Alley; and very smart—although very unshapely they looked, in a pair of bronze slippers.

She received the young lord with some degree of confusion; she knew not whether the meeting was to be hostile or amicable. Lord Fitz-Ernest at once satisfied her on that point. With his usual frank, unaffected manner, he shook hands with her, and immediately entered upon the subject of his visit, which was to intercede, in behalf of Rosalie's still being allowed to retain the comfort of Johnson's attendance.

Madame Gabrielli coloured violently, and appeared at a loss what to say, but on Fitz-Ernest's adding, "My dear Madame, it cannot surely be your own wish, to part with your excellent and well-tried servant;" he was surprised by seeing her suddenly burst into tears, and at the same moment hearing her husband on the stairs, she rose and hastily went into an adjoining apartment.

It was with no light degree of disgust, that Fitz-Ernest found himself *tete-a-tete* with this odious foreigner; and his heart sunk, when he remembered that Rosalie, with all her refinement, her ideas and manners so innocent, and lady-like, would soon be under the unlimited control of this low, coarse-minded man.

It was not long before he discovered that the expense attendant upon having the addition of Johnson in the journey was the chief objection to her accompanying them. This obstacle, Fitz-Ernest easily divined the means of overcoming; there was a golden key, which he found most useful in the present instance, and which immediately opened the heart of the avaricious Italian, and this generous noble youth, was not sparing in the expensive means that he took to obtain his purpose. On

promising to pay a large sum, Gabrielli agreed to allow Johnson to go with them to Italy, and more than one aching heart rejoiced at this event.

Although we could extract but little from this good woman, for she seemed determined to be as silent as possible on the subject, still it was too certain, from her grave looks, and the portentous shake of her head, when any questions were asked her, that already the weak, but unfortunate Madame Gabrielli had discovered that there were many more thorns than roses in the path she had chosen for herself; and that the dismissal of her old servant had been a dreadful stroke to her.

We may easily imagine Rosalie's gratitude; already had she looked up to Fitz-Ernest as a being so exalted—so superior, that she could almost have worshipped him; and now when he had told her what he had done, at the same time repeating those kind expressions which he had before so often uttered, "that she must ever consider him in the light of her most anxious friend, and remember, that if ever she imagined he had it in his power to befriend and assist her, she was to promise to apply to him, without hesitation or reserve;" when these words of friendship flowed from his lips, and Rosalie looked upon a countenance which was like a mirror, reflecting the most benevolent and beautiful qualities of the heart, with the full tide of gratitude overwhelming her every feeling, she sank before him, she clasped his knees, she kissed his hands, whilst tears of mingled joy and bitterness flowed in torrents down her cheeks.

"I cannot thank you," she faltered out in broken accents, "I cannot thank you;—poor indeed would be my weak expressions, to convey the depth of my gratitude; but, Lord Fitz-Ernest," she continued with the utmost anxiety depicted in her looks, "promise me one boon, and perhaps my heart may still not break; promise me, that under every circumstance that may hereafter befall me, you will not despise me, you will not prejudice me; for believe me when I declare, that abject as I may appear associating with, and surrounded by those whose conduct you must condemn, I bear a talisman about me which will preserve me from contamination—the idea of having once possessed your regard, and the affection of your noble family. You may avoid me," she added, sobbing bitterly, "but think with pity—not with scorn upon poor Rosalie."

Dear, excellent young man! little did he imagine, that whilst he was pouring oil and wine into the wounds of her mind; he was in fact, unconsciously, laying a foundation of wretchedness to the young girl, which did indeed prove incurable—and most fatal.

There are dormant fires lurking in the depths of the female bosom which, when once enkindled, become impetuous, and are sometimes desolating in their effects!

It is of no use dwelling upon this melancholy period—the deep sorrow of the young ones, and the graver regrets of her more experienced friends, for to Lady Belmont, with her refined and strict ideas, Rosalie appeared lost to them for ever.

The day arrived but too soon, and the poor girl was to be torn from those she loved so well.

I believe nothing would have supported her through the last parting, but the assurance I whispered into her ear, that it would not be long before she saw me; that I would follow her to Italy. At this last hope, a gleam of comfort did, for a moment, beam from those sad eyes, and she faintly said, "Then I feel that I shall not be utterly abandoned."

The day fixed for her departure was now come, and the sorrowing child was given into the hands of her mother.

Can I ever forget the anguish of her countenance as she clung to me, and fixed her mournful eyes upon me when I was about to take my leave! This might be said to be the first commencement of her real sorrows, and heavy and foreboding were the thoughts that filled my heart, when at last I bade her a sorrowful farewell.

CHAPTER IX.

Various circumstances, and a long and painful illness, prevented and deferred my proposed, and much desired visit to Italy. We had heard occasionally from Rosalie, but her letters were little satisfactory, for they were evidently written with constraint, which we could understand, as they were most certainly submitted to the inspection of those with whom she lived. At length I was enabled to leave England, and at once bent my steps towards Naples, in which city Rosalie resided. The date of her last letter indicated where she was to be found, and the morning after my arrival, I set out, my heart beating with that degree of agitation and nervous pleasure, which one experiences in the expectation of meeting those we love, after a long and painful absence.

The street was in an old part of the town, gloomy, when contrasted with the gay appearance of the modern city, which is formed upon a plan so splendid and elegant. The house to which I was directed, as the abode of Gabrielli, was built in the heavy imperfect style of architecture, invented and adopted during the middle ages, which gave a sombre appearance to the habitation.

I was preparing to ascend the staircase, which led to the apartments occupied by the family, when my passage was impeded by a young man, who entered immediately after me, and who, in his extreme impatience, little heeded me as he flew past, full of youthful activity and eagerness. I was peculiarly struck even by the transitory glance I caught of his countenance. I could easily perceive that he was Italian by birth, from his clear olive complexion, glowing, however, with the hues of health, his bright dark eyes, and black hair wreathed in short curls round his open, fearless brow; bold and light was his step, and I could not help smiling, when I contrasted it with the measured stiffened gait with which I slowly followed him; and then I almost sighed to think that my days of youth and strength were over.

The young man, who appeared to be about twenty years of age, carried in one hand an enormous bouquet; in the other an open basket, through which I saw some magnificent purple grapes. A kind of instinct told me they were for Rosalie, therefore, I followed his impetuous steps, as closely as I could. He passed along a gallery, and at length reached a door at which he paused, and knocked.

"*Entrate,*" said a soft musical voice, which at once I knew to be that of Rosalie. Immediately the door was opened by the youth, who, without closing it again, walked rapidly into the apartment. I did not advance, for I could stand concealed by a projecting part of the wall, and, at the same time, command a view of the interior of the room.

It was a vast apartment, furnished (or rather un-

furnished,) in the true Italian style. The table, at which indeed my sweet Rosalie was seated, and a few chairs, were the greater part of its contents, excepting a marble slab or two, upon which were arranged the choicest flowers. I must not, however, omit a pianoforte, a quantity of music, and several bird-cages suspended at the windows.

Rosalie, as I have already said, was seated before the table, busily employed in copying music. What a change had eighteen months wrought in her appearance! From the child, she had matured into the loveliest of women. She was pale and very thin, but the outline of her figure was beautiful in the extreme. She wore a white dress with long loose sleeves; her hair was simply arranged, in quite a classic manner, on her small and well-formed head; and her pleased smile, and the glow of animation which spread over her features, as she raised her eyes on the entrance of the youth, rendered her, at that moment, transcendently lovely.

"Oh Arturo," she exclaimed, in the purest Italian, as he approached her, "what—more beautiful flowers! Those you brought me last are not yet dead. I have just been putting fresh water to them; see how bright and beautiful they look; and those splendid grapes," she added, as he drew his treasure from the basket, "kind, good Arturo, how you spoil me—what should I do without you!"

"*Ah signorina mia*," replied the young man, his eyes glistening with pleasure, "how amiable it is of you to thank me; it is I who am the obliged; your goodness in accepting what I so humbly bring, makes me, indeed, the debtor. And see, sweet Rosalie," he continued, producing from the basket some stores of green food for the birds, "I have not forgotten what will make your pretty pets very happy to-day. I have taken a holiday this afternoon, and am come here to spend it with you. Will you allow me to remain, *bellissima signorina*?"

Rosalie smiled, and then sighed.

"I doubt whether Signor Gabrielli would be satisfied, that I should be so long idle; I have a great deal of music to copy, but you will assist me, and you shall afterwards sing with me, Arturo, and then my tasks will pass lightly and profitably away."

Arturo was about to answer, and a delighted acquiescence was upon his lips, when hearing the sounds of footsteps approaching, I thought it best to emerge from my place of concealment; in another moment, I had entered the apartment, and was standing before the astonished girl. With a shriek of surprise, and joy she flew into my arms, and whilst I pressed her to my bosom, I felt the tears of warm affection flow from my eyes.

It is impossible to describe the joy we both felt in this reunion. Rosalie appeared as if restored to new life. She made me sit down, then placed herself on her knees before me, with my hands closely pressed within hers, and her tearful eyes fixed earnestly upon my countenance, she remained some time in silence; her heart was too full for words—she could only look her joy.

She was roused from this state of mute happiness by seeing Arturo suddenly take up his hat, and rush towards the door, through which he was going to make a sudden exit, when she called to him: "Arturo, come here; before you go—and I will not detain you now—let me present you to Mr. Leslie. How often have you heard me talk of this dearest and best of friends."

The countenance of the young man, which had before assumed rather a disappointed and sombre

appearance, now beamed again, and he approached me with an air at once courteous and kind. "Oh! my dear sir," she continued, "you must love Arturo for my sake; he has truly been to me the best of brothers; if you did but know all his affectionate attention—his unremitting exertions for my comfort and happiness! Without him, I feel I hardly could have drawn on my weary existence."

The young Italian's cheeks glowed, and his eyes glistened as Rosalie uttered these words; he was vehement in the warmth of his expressions, but she interrupted him by saying: "Now, Arturo, you must go, for I have much—oh how much to say to this my friend—my father. Come again in two hours, if you can; but at present I have neither eyes nor ears for any one else."

The youth instantly obeyed her; but with steps less light and elastic, than those with which he had entered the apartment: and as I gazed after his youthful, and beauteous form as he slowly departed, the thought darted quickly through my mind, that there was a tale of love to be told in that quarter.

And now that we were alone, Rosalie seemed to feel, that she must again renew her tender caresses. Her warm heart appeared to expand with delight at the sight of her old and devoted friend. My silver hair and furrowed brow, were looked upon by her with more tenderness—more apparent admiration, than she had bestowed upon the handsome countenance of Arturo. How truly lovely she looked, sweet girl! I sighed, when I saw all my predictions as to her beauty, so fully verified.

By degrees, when the first emotions of her joy had partly subsided, I drew from her the particulars of her life since our separation.

Poor child, much indeed had she suffered! Gabrielli, she confessed to me—but she did so with shrinking, fear, and hesitation—was possessed of a most violent and tyrannical temper. Her unfortunate mother was one of the most wretched of women; as for herself—and her face grew pale, and she shuddered as she commenced the subject—she said she certainly did undergo much fatigue, and was harassed to the very utmost pitch, by the Italian's absorbing anxiety, that she should improve in music; almost every hour in the day was devoted to the study of it. But that was the least part of her troubles, her fondness for the science rendered it supportable; it was living under the same roof with such a man—witnessing his daily ill-treatment of her unhappy mother—that was most distressing to her feelings; and then the having to associate with his friends!

"Towards me," she continued, "his conduct is at present less brutal. I have taught him," and her eyes kindled as she spoke, and a flash of indignant fire shot from them, "in a degree to fear me. Oh dear, Mr. Leslie," she exclaimed, bursting into tears, "if you knew what I have suffered—what I have endured; that monster has exposed me to insult, which I would not shock your kind heart by describing. In order to teach me (he said) the science of acting, he brought into the house a man of the vilest and most vicious habits. I was left alone with him for hours, exposed to all the libertinism of his manners; but," she continued, as rising from her seat, she paced the apartment with agitated steps, whilst her countenance assumed a look of fierceness, quite unnatural to her, "I have dared him to repeat the outrage; young and feeble as I am, I conquered—but oh! in what manner! what torture I endured throughout the trial! I determined not to open my lips, not to sing a single note, until I obtained Gabrielli's solemn promise, that I should never see that man again, or be exposed

to similar insults; that I was to take no lesson of any description, but in the presence of Johnson, who, I knew, alone had the strength of mind to guard me properly from insolence; but before I could obtain this promise, what weeks of persecution and cruelty had I to undergo! I was threatened—confined. He even endeavoured to starve me into obedience; but he at length discovered that I possessed a spirit unbending as his own, how little careful I was of preserving my wretched life, how slightly I valued its continuance! Death would indeed have been a welcome release. Oh! how I prayed for it. My health gave way, but my resolution was firm—immovable. I cannot tell you all my reasons, for what may appear to you excessive obstinacy. I would not torture your kind nature by detailing them, they are too horrid—too dreadful,” and she placed her hands upon her eyes, as if to shut out some painful image.

I was so much shocked that I could not interrupt her by making any comment; and, conquering her emotion, she continued her sad story.

“Agony of mind—deprivation of every kind, brought me at last to the brink of the grave.—Then did my persecutor become really frightened—he thought he was about to lose a source of future wealth, which he fancied is vested in the unfortunate girl before you. In dismay, he promised any thing, every thing to tranquilize my mind; but still though weakened in body, to the utmost pitch of feebleness, I was firm as a rock in determination. I made him write what I dictated, and obtained from him a solemn assurance, which has hitherto benefited me much. I have now the comfort of this apartment, which I can call my own. I continue to study hard, certainly: I go to my bed every night fatigued and exhausted, but still it is peace—happiness—compared to what I have endured. I have had some gleams of comfort throughout all this distress. I have been supported in my duty by all that I learnt from you, dearest sir: strength was vouchsafed to me, by clinging to that trust, which indeed, in my hour of need, did not fail me.

“And what support and consolation was the attendance of Johnson! it has been indeed an inestimable blessing, and I prize it doubly, from the remembrance whence it sprang. Signor Gabrielli would fain have deprived me of this my only consolation, but for the continued generosity of dear, dear Lord Fitz-Ernest, who, by paying largely for her board, bribes the avaricious man to allow her to remain: nothing else would have tempted him, for in his heart he detests her—almost fears her; for she is bold and dauntless, where either the welfare of my mother or myself is concerned; she braves his anger and asserts our rights; we could not have supported our fate, if it had not been for her unflinching exertions for our comfort.”

“And who,” I asked, after a pause of some moments, “is the youth who has just left the room?”

“Oh! dear Arturo,” she replied, her countenance relaxing into a gentle smile, “the best and kindest friend I have in Italy, who has been truly a brother to me here. Although quick and violent in his feelings, like all Italians, notwithstanding his impetuosity, he possesses good sense and the truest of hearts. My acquaintance with him commenced at the seminario, which I have attended for the purpose of study; his profession also is to be that of music. His voice is a splendid tenor, and as practising with him is very beneficial to me, his intimacy has been tolerated, and his society has been my greatest solace. I cannot enumerate all the acts of kindness and attention which he seems never weary of showering upon me. If I could

only make him a little less *empressé*—a little calmer, quieter in his deportment, our intercourse would be delightful; but he sometimes overpowers me by the warmth and energy of his desire to contribute to my comfort and happiness; but Arturo, with all his little faults, is very dear to me.”

I looked at Rosalie when she said this, with some degree of curiosity; but she was so composed and collected, so completely free from the embarrassment which ever attends any feelings, belonging or proximating to the passion of love, that at once I felt certain that although poor Arturo might experience towards her sentiments of the warmest nature, hers were those of the calmest and most sisterly affection.

Whilst we were thus speaking, a gentle knock was heard at the door, and the subject of our conversation again entered. He came in with a degree of timidity, uncertain whether his presence was desired or not; he was most cordially welcomed by us both. I could speak Italian fluently, therefore was able to converse with him, and oh! how the eloquent blood rushed to his cheeks, and what joy sparkled in his eyes, when I told him that he must look upon me also as his friend; for all that Rosalie had related to me of his goodness towards her had already created for him, a warm place in my heart.

Certainly, I never saw a more splendid specimen of youthful, though manly beauty: and when I gazed on him, I could almost have accused my dear favourite of coldness, not to be influenced by the ardour which flashed from every glance of his expressive countenance. Little did I imagine at that moment what was passing in her heart; how completely every avenue of love for another was obstructed by one all-engrossing feeling, one which strengthened daily—hourly—which was nurtured and cherished by her, as the only stay by which she clung to existence. “Man is the creature of impulse, of ambition; love is the embellishment of his early life, or a song piped in the interval of the acts, but a woman’s whole life is a history of the affections; the heart is her world—it is there her ambition strives for empire—it is there her avarice seeks for hidden treasures; she sends forth her sympathies on a venture, she embarks her whole soul in the traffic of affection, and if shipwrecked her case is hopeless—for it is the bankruptcy of the heart.”

How delightful was this evening which we passed together. Gabrielli and his wife had gone on an expedition of amusement, and were not to return until the following day. Poor Madame Gabrielli was now and then included in these trips, but Rosalie never accompanied them. There were several reasons for keeping her secluded, besides her own great distaste to the idea of mixing with the associates of the Italian. In the subsequent knowledge I acquired of the position and views of the man, I soon discovered the motives which directed him, in many parts of his conduct towards Rosalie. I opened his heart, and gained his confidence in some degree, by the only means which I found would insure me free access to my dear young friend. I made him presents, which at once secured me from his impertinence, and converted him into my humble servant.

He told me that Rosalie’s improvement in singing was wonderful beyond measure; that her voice surpassed any he had before heard; her acting also was superb; it appeared as if she were born for the stage, to surprise the world by her dramatic powers.

“Most fortunate it was,” he added, “that I dis-

covered the gem, which would otherwise have been lost—buried in obscurity. She is a star too shining—too precious to be brought forward on any inferior stage; she must, from the commencement of her career, be first rate, she must be duly appreciated.” Therefore the London Opera was fixed upon, as most worthy to be the theatre at which she should make her debut.

“Her beauty,” he also said, “will create a most vivid sensation; for, indeed, he declared that he was already obliged to keep her *en retraite*, as she attracted the utmost attention, whenever she was seen by strangers; “in short,” added the wily Italian, endeavouring to blind me by assuming an appearance of excessive regard for propriety, and anxiety for Rosalie, “I do all in my power to preserve the charming girl from any thing that can injure the innate purity and freshness of her mind—and I shall have pride and satisfaction in feeling that, even in a profession so open to calumny and censure, there will be at least one *cantatrice sans reproche*.”

Vile wretch! I longed for lightning to flash from my eyes, to blast him for his iniquitous hypocrisy. I, who knew all his base feelings, and the conduct he had at first pursued towards the poor girl!

His only motive for thus secluding her arose from selfishness—the desire that her beauty and talent might burst like an unexpected meteor upon the public; for I heard from Johnson what had indeed appalled me, had shaken my very inmost soul with horror; and it required much self-command, I may add deception, which only my affection for Rosalie could have made me assume, to maintain a semblance of peace towards the base Gabrielli. Johnson, with tears of sorrow and disgust, gave me a touching history of all that my poor cherished child had endured; personal privations and discomfort, were but light matters in the scale, compared with the other miseries she had encountered.

It appeared that, in order to bring down her mind in some degree to a level with those with whom she would have to associate—in short, with his own vulgar and depraved tastes and habits, his plan evidently was, at first, to vitiate her feelings—to accustom her to the society and manners of licentious actors and actresses. He wished her to look upon vice and immodesty with a hardened eye—to feel pleasure in the light frivolous society of those with whom he lived on terms of intimacy. He cared not what she did, so that she was secured to him as a source of wealth; could he once accomplish this, his task would be much less difficult—he would then be able to mould her to his every wish.

To execute this desired end, the wretch brought into the house a friend and accomplice; a man whose talent and science in the art of music and acting rendered him well able to aid in the instruction of Rosalie. He was worthy of being the tool and confidant of Gabrielli. The sweet, innocent girl was insulted by this villain, and none of her complaints were heeded by the person who ought to have been her protector. But she at last prevailed; her firmness terrified Gabrielli into submission to her will; and this weak, delicate girl, with no other weapon but her virtue and innocence, had the power of subduing even the audacity of these licentious men.

How proud I felt of my pupil—the child of my adoption and love. She had, indeed, been strengthened by the armour of that faith which it had been my task to inculcate; sustained by its powerful influence, the poor child sunk not under the pressure

of persecution. When the clouds gathered, and the murmur of the storm was heard, she found refuge in that trust, which is described as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.

CHAPTER X.

The aspect of Rosalie's existence had, for a brief space, brightened. I represented to Gabrielle how necessary relaxation was to the restoration of her health, and so that she still continued her studies, he was willing that, under my escort, she should make some excursions in the neighbourhood. We also went together almost every night to the Opera of San Carlos. A box was appropriated to her use; for, as Gabrielli was a principal performer, he had it in his power to command that indulgence at an easy rate, and he forced her to avail herself of the privilege, it being professionally advantageous to her. Naples is still the great mart of the musical genius of Italy; and its grand national opera of San Carlos, taken in all its combination of architectural and ornamental beauty, its adaptation to sound, principal singers, fine choruses, and scenic illusions, is certainly superior to all other theatres in the world.

Music was a real source of delight to Rosalie; and had it not been forced upon her in so unpleasant a manner, would almost have amounted to a passion.

We took some delightful expeditions. Every thing was new and charming to Rosalie, who had been so strictly secluded. Arturo was ever our companion in these rambles, and daily I became more attached to this most interesting youth. I perceived, with sorrow, with what intensity his ardent heart doated upon Rosalie. It did indeed grieve me, for I foresaw trouble to one who had created an interest in my affections. As for Rosalie, I felt that my love for her was my destiny—a chain that had wound itself round my heart; and I was certain, that although I pressed it to my bosom with affection, it was drawing upon me sorrow—both future and present.

Our excursions were truly delightful. Sometimes we commenced them at so early an hour, that the stars were still burning brightly in the clear blue heavens, but they soon, though gradually, to use the words of a distinguished writer, “paled their ineffectual fires.”

These expeditions often led us to Puzzuoli, Baia or the woody cliffs of Pausilippo; and as, on our return, we glided along the moonlit bay, the melody of Italian strains seemed to give enchantment to the scenery of its shore. At this cool hour, the voices of the vine dressers were frequently heard in trio, as they reposed after the labour of the day, on some pleasant promontory under the shade of poplars; or the brisk music of the dance, from fishermen on the margin of the waves below. The boatmen rested on their oars, while we listened to voices modulated by sensibility to finer eloquence than it is in the power of art alone to display;—and at others, while we observed the airy, natural grace, which distinguishes the dance of the fishermen and peasants of Naples. Frequently as we glided round a promontory, whose shaggy mosses impended far over the sea, such magic scenes of beauty unfolded themselves, adorned by these dancing groups on the bay beyond, as no pencil could do justice to. The deep clear waters reflected eve-

ry image of the landscape; the cliffs branching into wild forms crowned with groves, whose rough foliage often spread down their steep, picturesque luxuriance; the ruined villa on some bold point, peeping through the trees; peasants' cabins hanging over the precipices, and the dancing figures on the strand—all touched with the silvery tint and soft shadows of moonlight. On the other hand, the sea trembling with a long line of radiance, and showing in the clear distance, the sails of vessels stealing in every direction along its surface, presented objects as interesting as the landscape was beautiful.

I have sometimes blamed myself for having exposed poor Arturo to such a combination of enchantments; under such a sky, with scenes of beauty so seductive around him, his mind must have been more than ever rendered liable to love. All nature seemed to conspire against him, to fan the flame which already burnt far too fiercely in his bosom.

It was surprising to see how much Rosalie's health improved during this period, and the consequent effect it had upon her beauty. Her complexion, though always pale, lost the sickly tinge which before had dimmed the lustre of her charms—her eyes assumed almost their usual expression. On my first arrival, I was startled by the degree of fierceness and wildness with which they were occasionally lighted up: and on speaking upon this subject to the faithful Johnson, she shocked me by the account she gave of the variable state of the spirits, and even of the temper of Rosalie.

"Indeed, sir," she said, "had that wicked man not ceased, in some measure, to persecute the poor child, I do not hesitate to say that I feel convinced that her mind would have given way. Many a night and day have I watched her without daring to leave her side, for certainly there was something, as you remark, in the appearance of her eyes, which made me tremble; and after that dreadful time, when she received such gross insults from the wretch Rinaldo, I was obliged to apply leeches to her temples to produce consciousness, so completely were her senses failing her."

This account made me very anxious, and I redoubled my efforts to amuse her mind, and in every way to ameliorate her condition. I discovered that it was Gabrielli's intention that the following spring should be the period for her to make her debut upon the stage. Poor girl! when I considered the excitement such an event would occasion, I felt how completely, notwithstanding her aversion from the task, she would enter into every character she had to personify. From the specimens I had witnessed of her acting, I could easily perceive that she would be a complete enthusiast in the art, and no doubt had she not been educated with such different and refined ideas, the *metier* itself might not have been distasteful to her.

Whilst rehearsing scenes from some of the most splendid operas, she was like one inspired. Her magnificent voice—the extraordinary animation of her countenance and gestures—the dignity and grace of every movement, rendered her indeed unrivalled. She was then fearfully beautiful; but there was something in the impression it made upon my feelings, unearthly, unnatural, and although I could not but admire her acting, and feel almost electrified by its brilliancy, still it always filled me with dread—with dismal forebodings.—Could her mind bear such violent excitement?—Such energy must prey upon itself—that degree of feverish vitality must consume, even whilst it brightened.

It was truly a musical treat to listen to the duets she sang with Arturo. His voice was a splendid tenor, and the fire and intensity of his feelings made him do ample justice to the beautiful music they sung. He was an orphan, and had been educated by an uncle. His career was to be that of the stage, but his relative had no farther ambition for him than the Italian theatres. I, however, soon discovered that his ardent desire pointed to the same mark, from whence Rosalie was expected to derive such fame; to follow her footsteps—to watch over her with the anxious eye of deep-rooted attachment—to be her friend, ay!—even her lover, seemed to be the hope which mingled in his every plan for the present and the future.

I believe I have naturally a tinge of romance in my composition, and I must own that the warm and generous—the impetuous disposition of this young man—the extraordinary beauty of his person, and the strong indications he gave of a kind and excellent heart, enlisted me completely in his cause; and I wondered that Rosalie did not return his love. I was sometimes almost vexed with her for the coolness with which she often treated him, and I sympathized truly in all he felt, in consequence of the manner in which she used to endeavour to damp the warmth of his affection; but she acted honourably. She had no heart to give; and although she really loved him, with the sweet, though placid feelings of a sister, and was touched beyond measure by all his tender cares; still I saw that she wished to destroy, at once, any hope that might arise in his mind, that her sentiments would ever resemble those which so tumultuously agitated the bosom of Arturo.

My visit to Naples was shorter than I had intended it should be; indeed, I do not know how I could ever have torn myself away from the only object on earth to whom I felt my presence so essential for comfort and happiness, had I not been recalled to England by the urgent entreaties of a relative, my return being required for the arrangement of some affairs of the utmost importance to his future welfare. During my stay near Rosalie, I remarked with surprise, how very seldom she made the Belmont family the topic of her conversation; indeed, after she had satisfied her anxiety respecting their welfare, and received from me, upon my first arrival, a most minute and separate account of each individual composing that beloved circle, she always avoided the subject.

I once expressed this surprise to her, and her answer affected me much. With the deepest sadness in her voice, she said, "Dear Sir, it is upon principle, that I check both my words, and even thoughts upon that subject, which is to me the dearest I can ever have on earth. I endeavour to turn from it, and the effort wrings my very inmost soul; but I strive, by degrees, to wean my mind from the idea—the hope of ever again meeting my almost idolized friends, as I have done. Their kindness towards me, I am convinced, will never lessen; their feeling of interest will follow me to my grave; of this I am thoroughly convinced, and the thought is sweet and soothing consolation; but the more I see of this profession, the more I know of the people with whom I must ever associate—I feel how impossible it would be, how inconsistent with the dignity and purity of those noble young ladies, to hold any thing like intimacy with one who has been contaminated, by living in an atmosphere so foul—so tainted, as that in which I have for some time dragged on my weary existence. I feel that I am degraded—sunk—I move about with downcast eyes and hesitating steps; I

feel already the finger of scorn pointing at me.—You know, my dear Mr. Leslie," she continued, with a kind of wild unnatural laugh, "actresses in this country are denied even the rights of sepulture; does not that convince you how completely out of the pale of decent society they must be considered? scarcely ranked as christians, they live despised and die unheeded—unprayed for. No," she exclaimed, as she stood before me, her hands clasped, and that expression glistening in her eyes, which it always alarmed me to behold, "poor Rosalie has taken her final leave of happiness—of hope. I may indeed say with the wretched Medea, *piu speme non mi resta*," and at that moment how beautiful was her attitude, but what a countenance of wretchedness did she exhibit!

"You little know the state of my heart, the torture—the agony I endure; but I have one ray of comfort," she continued, clasping her hands with a look of sorrow, I can never forget; "I am convinced that it will not last very long; the source from whence I derived happiness is all dried up; but recollect, Mr. Leslie," she added, in a hurried manner, and laying her hand upon my arm, and looking wildly and imploringly in my face, "I shall be in England, I fervently pray, when I die; dear generous England!—there, in that blessed land, the refuge for the unhappy, they do not refuse a narrow grave, a funeral service to the humble broken-hearted actress; remember your promise, Mr. Leslie: recollect the old yew tree—the shaded corner in the church-yard at Fairbourne; you must promise me not to forget it, oh! promise, promise," she continued, becoming violently hysterical, and indeed I had to promise—to sooth—to endeavour for many hours to calm her, before she could in any way control the overpowering agitation and excitement of her spirits.

Poor girl! in her almost frenzied manner, how truly did she personify some of the heroines whose characters she studied to represent. I had seen her rehearse the part of *Nina Pazza*, and, gracious heavens! with what thrilling effect! How completely could she portray, and identify herself with the semblance of madness! I, indeed, trembled for her mind. Could she not be saved from a continuance of her present life? If not, I plainly saw she would be lost for ever; but what was to be done? what course to be pursued?

The Italian evidently regarded me with a suspicious eye, and I was certain that he longed for my departure; but still I was determined to maintain my ground. I plied him with presents; anticipated his wants—his wishes, almost exhausted my slender finances, by temporizing with this wretch; but imperative duty at length called me away, and the poor child was again left in the power of this monster.

CHAPTER XI.

It was at Brighton, in the month of November. The Court had taken up its abode at the Pavilion. The town was one scene of gaiety and bustle—crowds of well-dressed people were thronging the promenades, and the pure air and bright atmosphere seemed to have imparted life and vivacity to all. The presence of royalty, the expectation of seeing the cortege from the palace pass to and fro, gave an additional interest to the busy, lively scene, as each individual received the passing, kind, and condescending notice of a sovereign whose memory must

ever recur to his people with feelings of tender as well as of grateful recollection. He was, indeed, the father of his people, for, in the almost affectionate interest he felt in them all, there was a sort of parental kindness, which sunk deep into their hearts, and which they never can forget.

It was one of those lovely mornings that occur frequently at this favoured spot, even in winter; the air was calm, and the sun so powerful, that, although, probably, in the country there might have been a hard frost—here, the air was brisk, but not cold. The sea was quiet as a lake—all nature smiled—autumn appeared as if it were giving its parting gala.

Two young men were sauntering listlessly upon the esplanade; they were both handsome, and aristocracy had marked itself upon their brows. After walking in silence for some moments, the taller, and, perhaps, strictly speaking, the handsomer of the two, and whom we will designate as Sir Francis Somerville, turned to his companion and said, evidently wishing to get rid of him—

"My good fellow, if you are waiting for me, perchance you may grow weary of the task, for it is my intention to remain here at least an hour."

"Tell me your inducement, and perhaps I may be inclined to do the same; but I suppose it is the usual reason, *les beaux yeux* of some fair maid, wife, or widow."

"It is, indeed," exclaimed Sir Francis, warming into confidence as he entered upon the subject. "I am expecting again to see the most beautiful creature my eyes ever looked upon."

"Then," replied the other, "I too am fixed as a rock;" and he forthwith took possession of a seat; Sir Francis was about to place himself by his side, when he appeared to be suddenly transfixed by the appearance of some object; and his friend saw him turn extremely red, and, following the direction of his gaze, perceived approaching the figure of a young girl. She was rather tall than otherwise, and her figure was concealed by a large cloak; her bonnet almost entirely shaded her countenance, and an envious veil completed the concealment. She carried in her hand a roll of music. She had nearly reached the spot where the two young men were sitting, when a child, who was playing with a hoop, ran violently against her, and, with the movement, the parcel dropped from her hands; in another instant, the slight string that bound it, giving way by the fall, the music was scattered about, and the wind assisted in dispersing it in all directions.

The two young men gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of assisting the fair sufferer afforded by this confusion, and it was not without some difficulty that they contrived to collect all the various pages that were flying about, to the amusement of the passers by.

During this process, the face of the young girl had been disclosed, and a more lovely one was seldom or never seen. She appeared to be not more than eighteen years of age—such large dark eyes!—a complexion pale but clear, and smooth as marble;—and how is it possible to describe the beautiful form of those rosy lips, which, when they smiled, revealed teeth of the most dazzling whiteness! Her hair was jet black, plainly braided upon her open forehead, and when, on receiving the music from Sir Francis, she drew off her glove, in order to fasten with the string the truant leaves, the young men looked with delight upon the small white hands, so delicate and so lady-like.

But now all was accomplished;—the music was rolled up and more firmly secured, and the young

girl, with a graceful courtesy of thanks, was about to depart, when suddenly she turned her large beaming eyes upon the companion of Sir Francis, who was standing before her, his eyes riveted with admiration and scrutiny upon her countenance. She looked for a moment fixedly upon him, and then, uttering a faint low scream, would have sunk to the ground had not her arm been caught by a woman who had, unperceived by the others, joined the group. She in an instant roused herself, and, without again raising her eyes, hastily took the arm of this person, and, walking on as fast as her trembling limbs would enable her to do, reached a "fly," and was soon whirled out of the sight of the two friends, who remained for some minutes motionless and silent from the surprise occasioned by the strangeness and rapidity of this adventure.

"By Jove! this is devilish odd!" exclaimed Sir Francis Somerville. "What made her scream, and almost faint?—she was all smiles and blushes but one moment before! I verily believe it was something she saw in you that frightened her! What could it be?" he again exclaimed, looking at his companion from head to foot; "there's nothing so wondrous frightful about you, or so captivating either, forsooth! You are a good-looking fellow, but upon my word," added the self-satisfied Sir Francis, twisting his mustachios, and casting his eyes with complacency on his own well-proportioned limbs, "if she were inclined to fall in love at first sight, I do not see why she might not have chosen me, quite as soon as your lordship!"

The young lord laughed at his friend's complimentary speech, but, as they walked back to the Pavilion, for they were both at that time *attaches* to the Court, he was grave and thoughtful, notwithstanding all the inuendoes and banterings of Sir Francis.

The truth was, there was something in the countenance of the young girl that had peculiarly arrested his attention, and struck upon some chord which vibrated to his heart. It was not her beauty alone: there was an indefinable feeling of having seen some one who resembled her; but it was so vague and shadowy that he could not fix it upon any one individual; it was not so much admiration as a sensation of intense curiosity and interest. There was an expression in the glance of the unknown beauty that haunted his imagination; and the accent of her voice, when she briefly expressed her thanks, rang on his ears like some well-remembered melody. He must see her again.

The young man was restless and uncomfortable, and he saw that he was watched with a scrutinizing eye by Sir Francis, who already felt himself rather ill-used, and jealous. He had been the first to discover the fair *incognita*, and fancied that she was his exclusive property. To improve his acquaintance with her he was quite determined; but he would not again allow of a partner in the affair. With indefatigable industry, which would have been admirable in a better cause, he sought to discover where she lived, and who she was—but in vain—no trace of her could be found!

It must also be allowed, that Lord Fitz-Ernest (whom we have before forgotten to designate by his proper name) was not idle in the same pursuit; but the mysterious beauty had disappeared; and, although he lingered, hour after hour, on the esplanade—looked, with a penetrating eye into every vehicle that passed—resorted to the libraries—allowed himself to be jostled by the dirty mob, as he loitered at the coach-offices, and, in short, wearied himself by his anxiety, he could not again feast his earnest gaze upon those expressive features; he

could only recall to his fancy the enchantment of her smile, and remember the sweetness of her plaintive voice.

For a few days the impression was vivid in the extreme; but with the changeful, happy life of a young man, with the world and all the enjoyments it contains before him, the keenness of it by degrees wore off; and, although the image of the lovely girl often arose before his imagination, in a manner for which he could scarcely account, still it was but a passing thought, and no longer proved, as at first, a real source of annoyance and torment.

CHAPTER XII.

We have lost sight, for some time, of the Belmont family. It was several months after my return to England, that I found all these amiable beings well and happy in London. Most eagerly and anxiously they asked for every particular concerning poor Rosalie. The account I gave of her caused bitter tears to flow from many an eye.

Sweet Lady Gertrude was, indeed, heart-stricken when she heard the details of all the sufferings her loved friend had endured, and the miseries that were still in store for her. The young men were indignant and disgusted. Lord Henry, who was of an impetuous spirit, quick and ardent in all his feelings, strongly urged his wish to set off immediately for Italy, in order to endeavour to extricate his dearly remembered playmate from the hands of her tyrant.

It may be readily imagined that I opposed this plan most resolutely. What a train of evils would it have engendered! I wished that I had painted the affair with less vivid colours; I saw the effect it produced on the minds of both the young men, and, as is often the case, after having been too diffuse and communicative upon any subject, I longed to unsay all that had escaped my lips.

I remembered the dark countenance of the Italian, the malignity which constantly overspread his features, and, at that moment, I could even imagine that his passions might impel him to the perpetration of almost any crime, howsoever hideous.

I remembered, too, Arturo—his deep, his jealous love for Rosalie; how would he endure the sight of this handsome, generous youth, upon whom the object of his unrequited passion would pour all the hitherto locked up torrent of her affection—an affection, purely sisterly, but still one she did not dare to demonstrate towards the fiery young man, whose blood flowed with the vehement warmth of his climate, unrestrained by education, precept, or example.

All that could be done at present, was to hold a council upon the subject, and endeavour to discover if there were any possibility of extricating her from the power of Gabrielli; but, after mature deliberation, we found that such a scheme, at present, would indeed be impracticable. The only plan to pursue, was to allow events to take their course; and, should the health of the poor girl really give way, after she had appeared upon the stage, which I felt convinced it certainly must do—then would be the moment to make terms with the Italian, and come forward to her rescue, although I feared—oh, God! and but too justly!—that the wretch would rather see her die in the fetters which his avaricious hand had bound around her.

In a private conversation with the Marchioness,

mentioned to her what I considered the morbid state of poor Rosalie's feelings, with regard to her situation, which made her shrink from the idea of associating with those she most loved. Lady Belmont was affected to tears, by this token of the sensibility of the poor girl. In reply, she said to me:

"I cannot but admit, in a great measure, the truth of what the dear child says upon the subject; it is a touching proof of the justness and propriety of her feelings; for, although I can never abandon or look coldly upon one I love, and ever shall continue to love so well, still it will be a difficult position for us all. The character of Gabrielli appears so unprincipled and unamiable, that it must be painful to my every feeling to see my daughters in any way mixed up in his concerns. However, their position in the world is such, they need not hesitate to take by the hand one who was the companion of their early years, public as may be her present situation. Still, it is a lamentable business," she continued, "and one that really dwells upon my mind, and makes me unhappy; I often deplore, and reproach myself for the part that I have had in this sad finale. The concerts at Belmont! when I brought her so unnecessarily forward, and placed her under the notice of this dreadful Italian; but, little did I foresee such a train of untoward events."

All this excellent lady said was but too true. I could only listen in silence, and inwardly deplore the sad fate of my poor Rosalie.

I soon discovered that Lady Gertrude had been wooed and won by a youthful nobleman, who appeared in every respect worthy of her. The marriage, however, was not to take place for some months, owing to the young man not having attained his majority. I fancied that I had also made another discovery. There was a certain Lady Constance Delavel, who was much talked about by my young friends; and I soon settled it in my own mind, that Fitz-Ernest must have looked kindly upon her. It appeared an alliance much desired by the family, who were vehement in their praise of this noble young lady; and, indeed, I was told, in confidence, by my sweet lady Gertrude, who never withheld any thing that she thought would interest and give pleasure to her fond old friend, that she knew the fair Constance had no longer a heart at her own disposal, for she was certain it was devotedly bestowed upon her brother.

"But, although Fitz-Ernest," she continued, "adores dear Constance very much, I fear it is not, as yet, that warm attachment which I am sure she feels towards him; but we hope and pray that, in time, we may have the joy of seeing him thoroughly impressed by her perfections. She is a being most peculiarly formed to constitute the happiness of such a delightful creature as our own dear Fitz-Ernest. I am almost inclined to imagine," the sweet girl added, smiling and blushing, "that we women only know how to love fervently and devotedly. However, it is not fair to say so, for I think I could point out one who understands the feeling as well as we do. You have never told me, Mr. Leslie, how you like Alandale; but you must love him, and number him also amongst your children, as you have always considered us."

My heart was truly touched by the affection and confidence of this lovely being. I assured her of all she longed and hoped to hear, and gave deserved praise to the object of her choice, who was, indeed, a noble, fine young man, and, I trusted fervently, worthy of the treasure it was his bright destiny to hope to possess.

I was, of course, all anxiety to see Lady Con-

stance, and an opportunity soon occurred of satisfying my curiosity. I heard that she had arrived in London, and the next day I found her in Lady Gertrude's morning-room. I was introduced to her in a most flattering manner, and was proud to find that she seemed predisposed, by the affectionate partiality of my dear young friend, to become at once acquainted with me.

I was immediately prepossessed in her favour. Though perhaps not, strictly speaking, beautiful, there was a degree of sweetness and benevolence in her countenance, combined with an air of graceful dignity in her bearing, which was more exquisitely bewitching than the most striking loveliness. Her figure was perfect, and her hands and feet were small and delicate—the stamp of high breeding pervaded her whole demeanour. At once I could have guessed that she was nobly born; and, on farther acquaintance, I perceived, with much satisfaction, that she was possessed of nobility of soul as well as that of station.

She greeted me most cordially; in a moment I was at my ease with her: and before I had been in her presence half an hour, I was as devoted to her cause, and as anxious for her marriage with Fitz-Ernest as if I had known her from her infancy.

"Oh, how glad I am that you like her, which I see you do," whispered Lady Gertrude to me, as her friend moved across the room to examine some work that was in a frame near the window.

"Like her! who could see her and not admire her!" I answered, in the same low tone.

At this instant the door opened, and our party was increased by the presence of Fitz-Ernest. Then, indeed, did I see the eloquent blood rush over the face and neck of Lady Constance, as she stooped over the frame, and pretended to be busily employed in examining the flowers which were there traced; and when she again raised her head to return Fitz-Ernest's kind, almost affectionate greeting, I saw that she looked paler than she had been before.

I was not quite satisfied with the young lord's manner; it was almost too kind—too cordial—too unrestrained, to be that of a lover; still, I thought, love must follow; he can never be so cold-hearted as to withstand such attachment as thrills within the breast of that very delightful girl.

The conversation soon took a lively and general turn; Lady Constance quickly recovered from the little embarrassment occasioned by the sudden entrance of Fitz-Ernest, and we all enjoyed our animated and agreeable discussions. Lady Constance evinced a highly cultivated mind, and a lively and refined imagination. Lord Fitz-Ernest had taken up the Morning Post, to find out the advertisement of a new book, and after he had done so, he continued to run his eye over the paper; suddenly he stopped, and exclaimed, in an agitated tone of voice:—"Good Heavens! Mr. Leslie, can this really be she?"

"What do you mean?" we all exclaimed.

He read aloud:—

"We understand that the debutante, who we have before announced as likely to make her appearance immediately after Easter, at the Italian Opera, is the Signora Rosalie, daughter of the celebrated Gabrielli, so well known and appreciated as the finest bass singer who has ever trod the boards of our Italian stage. The young lady is said to be very young, and eminently beautiful; her voice, a splendid contralto; her education, which has been completed in Italy, has rendered her a most finished and accomplished actress. We ex-

pect that the musical world will be astounded and delighted by the genius which will burst upon their enraptured senses. We consider that the expected debutante will prove a gem of the most extraordinary lustre."

"Give me the paper," cried Gertrude, hastily, and seizing it from the hand of her brother, she perused the paragraph rapidly again, in order, with her own eyes, to ascertain the truth of what she had heard, and then burst into tears.

"Are you indeed about to be sacrificed, poor Rosalie!" she exclaimed. "But then," and her countenance brightened, "she will be near us, and we can assist to support and encourage her."

My eyes were flowing in company with this sweet young lady's. The news had come upon us all so suddenly. I had not heard from Rosalie for some time, and we had no idea that she was so soon to be in England; indeed, at this very moment she might be in London.

Fitz-Ernest rose, and in a hurried manner took up his hat. "I shall go immediately," he said, "and endeavour to find out if they have arrived. I will call upon Lafleur, the manager, and ascertain all about them;" and quickly wishing Lady Constance good morning, he left the room.

I do not know why I did so, but instantly my eyes sought the countenance of Lady Constance, and saw that a pang of suffering had shot through her heart; but she strove to conceal any feeling but that of interest in the subject, and immediately entered warmly into it. She had often heard of Rosalie, but it was as the playmate of the young people of the Belmont family. Now, she asked several questions with much eagerness.

"Was she beautiful?"

"Fearfully so," I answered without reflection.

"Was she dark, or fair?"

I described her as she was now;—her jet black hair, her splendid eyes—

"Dark as the still night,"

her clear, rich, olive complexion; and, warming with the subject, I went on with all the garrulity of age and fondness, more fully to dilate upon it. "I shall never forget when last I saw her," I continued; "she was sitting, with her guitar in her hand, but she was not touching it; she was in deep and painful meditation, and appeared lost to every surrounding object; her fine hair was negligently bound up, but some tresses, which had escaped, played on her neck, and round her beautiful countenance; the light drapery of her dress—her whole figure, air, and attitude, were such as might be copied for a Grecian nymph."

At every word I uttered Lady Constance looked more sad, and I saw her cast a wistful glance at a large looking-glass which hung before her, where she beheld reflected features so totally different from those I had been describing; her soft, dove-like eyes—light glossy ringlets—the fairest and most delicate complexion.

"Poor Lady Constance!" I sighed to myself; "we have all stings in our hearts, and yours you have just received—God grant that it may not long rankle in it!" And I began to turn in my mind thoughts which had never before entered into it—the dreadful idea of the bare possibility of a circumstance that would be, indeed, most fatal—ruinous to the peace of all! This poor child, this unfortunate Rosalie, she seemed fated to be my torment. Much as I loved her, there was a degree of fearful anxiety mingled in all her concerns, a

kind of fatality about every circumstance which attended her, that alarmed and troubled me; she was a kind of light, a fascination which I felt I must ever follow, although it might lead me into sorrow and perplexity. She had twined herself so closely round my heart I could not cast her off; she must ever remain there; but a foreboding feeling told me that she would indeed prove a fearful care.

I sat, silent and absorbed in these painful meditations, but Lady Gertrude continued to talk with much eagerness upon the subject. Lady Constance asked, with intense interest, question after question; and I heard words which convinced me that the sweet fair girl was making for herself a formidable rival in poor Rosalie. "May God avert such an evil!" was my most fervent aspiration, as I quitted the apartment; and I carried away with me a painful impression, which seemed to haunt my imagination, and which I, in vain, endeavoured to shake off.

CHAPTER XIII.

I dined at Belmont House that evening, and, of course, was all impatience to learn the result of Fitz-Ernest's inquiries respecting Rosalie. He told me that he had seen Lafleur, who assured him that the Gabriellis had not yet arrived in London; he knew they were in England, as Gabrielli had been with him, but of their present place of destination he was quite ignorant; he added, that they must soon be here, as the appearance of the daughter, as he called her, was so shortly to take place.

"Good heavens, Mr. Leslie," continued Fitz-Ernest, "what a description Lafleur gives of Rosalie! what a splendid creature she must have become! He went to Italy on purpose to see her, before he entered into the engagement; for Gabrielli was preposterous in his demands; however, without any hesitation, he agreed to his enormous terms. I can well imagine her voice being as fine as he describes it; but, upon my word, to think of our poor little coal black Rose having turned out such an exquisitely beautiful woman, is almost beyond the verge of my comprehension; certainly I have heard you speak of her as perfection, but forgive me when I say that I believed just one half of all your eulogiums, and placed the other to the partiality and interest you have ever felt, in so warm a degree, for the poor girl; indeed, dear sir, you need not be offended at what I have said, for no one can participate more fully in your feelings than I do. I can never forget old associations and attachments, and the idea of Rosalie is annexed to many a bright thought of by-gone days."

After this period the subject of Rosalie was, for a short space, at rest. It was ever one of pain and anxiety, and we seemed all, with one accord, to be waiting for the moment when we should hear of her arrival in London; but it was with a heavy and foreboding heart that I looked forward to this event. In the mean time my thoughts were directed towards a result which offered a much more smiling aspect—it was the daily increasing pleasure Fitz-Ernest evinced in the society of the fair Constance. Not a day elapsed without the two families meeting, and every hour I fancied I observed the feelings of my young friend grow more like those of a lover towards this charming girl. "More I knew of her, the stronger became my

miration and affection, and although at first sight I did not think her peculiarly handsome, soon I began to consider her the very perfection of loveliness. My readers will long ere this have perceived that I am a most enthusiastic old man; some of them perchance may have set me down as being nearly in a state of dotage, but if they had only seen and known all the delightful beings, amongst whom it was my bright destiny to be thrown, they would excuse my raptures and *must* have said, that I could not be too ecstatic upon such a theme.

All, as I have before stated, went on smoothly with the Belmont family, and it was decided that the whole party were to go to the Abbey during the Easter recess. They greatly urged me to accompany them, but I was proof against all their affectionate importunity; there was something about that place which made me very sad, and I now invariably kept aloof from it; it reminded me too painfully of days of past happiness—days of usefulness—of peace arising from the feeling of well employed time, such as I was certain I should never again enjoy; another reason chained me to the spot, I wished to remain in London, to receive the earliest notice of Rosalie's arrival.

I solaced myself with the idea that in the lovely shades and walks of the beautiful spot to which they had repaired, the two lovers' minds would be more than ever attuned to love; the country seemed more fitted for such feelings, than the clouded atmosphere of London; I augured most favourably of this trip, and was convinced that Lady Constance would return the affianced bride of the excellent and noble Fitz-Ernest; and with these bright hopes I cheered myself, whilst the days passed without bringing any tidings of Rosalie. I importuned the manager with inquiries, but it struck me that he was cautious of speaking of the movements of Gabrielli, and I felt certain there was some preconcerted concealment in the case, and that the wily Italian was determined to keep Rosalie from the effects of our influence as long as it was possible to do so. I could only learn, what I before knew, that soon after Easter she was to make her appearance; I was fidgetty and uncomfortable. Constantly did I find myself bending my steps towards Golden Square, and all those neighbourhoods, where I thought it most likely Gabrielli would take up his abode.

I was walking one day across Soho Square, when at the corner, crowded by the numbers that attend the Bazaar, I felt some one suddenly take hold of my arm, and on turning round beheld Johnson. With a start of mingled surprise and pleasure, I accosted her, asking her at once a multitude of questions. My first inquiry, of course, was to ascertain if Rosalie was in London. She looked round on all sides before she replied, to be sure that no one saw her speaking to me, and then said, "Indeed, Sir, I am afraid to stay here any longer, for if the Signor was to see me, I should get into sad trouble, but if you will tell me where I can find you, I will endeavour to come to you between the hours of eight and ten this evening."

I gave her my address, and she immediately hurried away; fortunate was it that she did so, for turning quickly round the corner of the Square, I found myself abruptly face to face with Gabrielli. He evidently would much rather not have met me, but he was obliged to stop and receive my salutations, and in answer to my inquiries concerning Rosalie, said that she would be in London in a few days, but that he had not yet decided in what part of the town he should establish himself; he added, that she must entirely devote herself to her profes-

sion, that she would not have a moment's leisure, as the rehearsals would occupy all her time. The wretch was barely civil, and escaped from me hastily, with very little of the courtesy of manner, he used to evince towards me.

Anxiously did I await the arrival of Johnson. The poor woman came at length; she was looking dreadfully thin and haggard, and her countenance was full of trouble and vexation. I made her sit down by me, and then she told me they had been some months in England, living in the neighbourhood of London; but that Rosalie was so strictly guarded and secluded, that no letter she had written was allowed to be sent to any of her friends.

"I would willingly," said Johnson, "have been her secret messenger, but I have the eye of the Signor fixed upon me with suspicion and dislike. I dared not do any thing that might incur his displeasure, for he has sworn, with the most frightful imprecations, that if I in any way disobey his orders, if he can trace to me the slightest opposition to his will, I shall that moment be dismissed from the presence of those two poor beings who, without me, I really believe could not exist. Indeed, Sir," she continued, whilst the tears streamed from her eyes, "were I to leave them, God knows what would become of them! my poor mistress, you will be shocked to hear, is in a very precarious state; a blow from that inhuman monster has produced consequences which, I fear, will terminate in her death. As for Miss Rosalie, her situation has become much more insupportable, from the circumstance of that bad man having brought into the house a woman, whom I know to be of the most infamous character; she is the sister of Gabrielli; and poor Miss Rosalie says she is very musical and clever, but oh, Mr. Leslie," continued the faithful creature, sobbing as if her heart would break, "what a sight it is for me to behold this vile, degraded being, as I know her to be, lordling it over that poor, sweet, innocent girl, actually tyrannizing over her. Although Gabrielli has told you that the family have not yet come to London, you must not believe it; we have been some weeks settled in one of the most notoriously bad streets of the town, where a decent female is ashamed to show her face; and all this, I am certain, is his cunning plan to keep her completely aloof from the Belmont family, and from you; what is to become of her, God only knows! and much as I love the poor child, I have brought my mind to think that, should it please God to take her, it would be to me a less painful sight to look upon her lying at peace in her coffin, than exposed to such a life of wretchedness as she is now leading."

My readers will imagine the state of my feelings on hearing this sad narration; indignation and disgust were mingled with grief; and the inability I felt of being of any great use, in the present state of affairs, heightened my annoyance to real torture. It seemed dreadful to remain quiet, and to allow this poor young creature to be hurled, without one effort to save her, into that abyss of destruction which seemed to await her. But, gracious heavens! what was I to do? how cope with that villain, who would visit upon his victim every opposition that was offered to his infamous views. The Belmont family being away, increased my distress; there was no one to assist me with advice.

On making farther inquiries of Johnson, I found that even the comfort of poor Arturo's society was now at an end; for although they were obliged to meet professionally, Gabrielli looked with suspicion upon him, and Rosalie was so guarded by the lynx

eye of the Signora Myrtilia, that she dared not speak to him in confidence. Johnson also added, that her spirits were in a very fluctuating and alarming state; sometimes she was sunk to the lowest ebb of dejection, and, at other moments, there was a wild exciting fever about her, more painful to behold even, than her former sadness; "in short," added the poor woman, I have great fears upon one subject, which I can hardly dare name, it is too shocking—but, Sir, her mind! how will it ever stand all this tumult and disorder? when I see her acting a part all about a mad young lady, it nearly sets me beside myself, it is so dreadfully natural; indeed, it hardly seems like acting."

I deliberated for several minutes, and then begged that I might have Arturo's direction; this she could not give me, but promised to send him to me if she could possibly obtain a moment's conversation with him. All I could now do, was to force upon her some money, which I desired might be used in procuring any little comforts for the poor suffering mother and daughter, and I promised to endeavour soon to see Rosalie, without compromising Johnson as having been my informant respecting their place of abode.

My rest that night was much disturbed, by the melancholy images this visit had conjured up in my disordered fancy: and the wan, wretched countenance of poor Johnson was ever before me. It told a touching tale of woe and misery, scarcely needing the grievous circumstance she had related, to show what wretchedness the villanous conduct of Gabrielli, had brought on the hapless females now so completely in his power.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next morning I rose feverish and uncomfortable, and had just seated myself before my solitary breakfast table, when the door opened, and Arturo, with his usual impetuosity, rushed into the room, and in a moment was embracing me, after the demonstrative fashion of his own country.—Poor youth! can I ever forget the wild impassioned manner in which he saluted me? his joy and ecstasy in having once more found me. "Oh, my friend," he exclaimed, "am I again so happy as to feel myself in your presence, to see your kind countenance once more beaming upon me with looks of interest and affection—oh! how much have I required your assistance! how have I prayed that I might soon find you! thank Heaven, the desired moment is arrived, that here you are again to succour, to befriend our unfortunate Rosalie."

He was so agitated, that it was some time before he could calm himself, sufficiently to answer all my questions. He too, poor fellow! was very much altered in his appearance; he was looking worn and dejected; the fire of his eye was dimmed by sadness, and the tones of his voice seemed languid, compared with what they had been.

The history he gave me, tallied much with that which I had received from Johnson, as regarded the wretchedness of Rosalie. He told me that, added to all the other unfortunate circumstances, he had himself quarrelled with Gabrielli, who had forbidden his ever entering the house, and that he, henceforth he was never again to see her, excepting at the rehearsals which were immediately to take place at the Opera house.

Of fearful as Heaven!" he said, "I had received my

engagement previous to having brought upon myself the enmity of this monster, or this privilege would have been denied to me; but from having sung so long with Signora Rosalie, he was too glad to exhibit her talents to the London manager in their most attractive manner, and certainly, though I say it with all due humility, she never sang with so much spirit, as when her voice was combined with mine. Oh! those were happy days, when our music constituted her greatest solace; and the blissful months we spent, when you were in Italy, *caro signor mio!* the remembrance of them renders this present wretched period still more insupportable."

On questioning him farther, I discovered that the chief cause of Gabrielli's enmity towards Arturo had commenced from the young man's extreme anger and disgust, at his having given the persecuted Rosalie completely over to the jurisdiction of his sister, the Signora Myrtilia—a woman of doubtful character, and of a notoriously violent disposition. He had presumed to expostulate with the man, and had been insulted and spurned by him.

"Oh Signor!" he exclaimed, as with almost frantic agitation he paced the apartment, "what have I not endured in consequence! Look with pity, I beseech you, upon my presumption, when you hear that on the impulse of my outraged feelings at seeing the sweet angel forced to exist in an atmosphere so polluted, I went to her, and on my knees declared the passion which filled my breast—my unbounded love. I even pressed her to unite her fate with mine, obscure and uncertain as it was—I urged her to allow me to obtain the right of protecting her—of shielding her from insult and degradation, and then to fly to England and claim the kindness and assistance of her influential and attached friends; I felt that I had the means of working for her, and, oh! to be her slave—to toil for her—to devote every energy of mind and body to procure her comfort and happiness, would have been to me the brightest of destinies—oh! what unqualified bliss!" Here his emotion became too overpowering; for some moments he was unable to proceed, and was silent.

How much did I respect this silence, dear youth, and how truly did my heart respond to every feeling he expressed! it was with breathless anxiety that I listened, whilst he proceeded in his detail.

"Rosalie heard me with an amazed expression of countenance, but when she spoke, what torture did she inflict upon me! kindly, but resolutely, she endeavoured to destroy every hope of my heart; she told me that she did indeed love me tenderly—affectionately, and she fervently implored me to continue to her my faithful attachment—but as a friend only—I must extinguish every other sentiment. Gracious heavens! what did she ask? little could she imagine the stormy feelings of my soul! she might as well have ordered a volcano not to emit smoke and flames—the waves of the sea to cease to roll—the sun to hide its light. No, the flame must burn constantly—fiercely, until it consumes the heart from which it rises."

Truly did I believe him, for never did sincerity depicture itself more clearly than in the every expression which fell from the lips of this devoted being; he continued:

"Arturo," added she, "do not be so wretched on my account, for you may think it extraordinary, that at this moment, when my woes appear to thicken around me, I should be much calmer—much more resigned to my fate. I see an end to all my troubles, and whilst there is a hope to sustain us, every thing may be endured. What I am

going to say, may make you unhappy now, but it ought not to do so, and I hope, in time, even you will rejoice at the prospect which is to bring me freedom and, I firmly trust, felicity; the fact is, my kind Arturo—my best of brothers—I am certain that it is impossible for me to enjoy a shadow of happiness in this world; my destiny here is sealed. Whilst I anticipated a long life of misery, I was overwhelmed—dismayed; but my views have changed, and I confidently hope that there are bright joys for me above; that the arms of mercy are opening to receive me, and that my trial will not be of long continuance. I feel firmly persuaded that I shall soon die; I bear within me the seeds of disease; I am convinced this constant singing is destroying my lungs; depend upon what I say, I am an expiring lamp; I may burn brightly for a brief space, but quickly and suddenly will the flame of fire be extinguished; my mind and body are equally exhausted. But Arturo," she continued, pitying my distress—my perfect wretchedness—"do not be so unhappy—look at me, I am calm, and thanks to the God of mercies, perfectly resigned. It has not, however, been without the severest struggle that you find me as I am; human nature will rebel, and the tenacity with which—wonderful to say—we all cling to this miserable world, made me at first shrink from the idea of an early death—but the pang is over—thanks to the lessons of my beloved friend, Mr. Leslie; he pointed out to me the way, and my life of trial has rendered my task of submission much more easy than if the road had been strewn with roses; and my good Arturo, have I not a blessed example—a bright stimulus, when I remember who preceded me in the path of suffering, and who has hallowed and consecrated every step."

"Mr. Leslie," continued Arturo, "as the sweet creature thus spoke, her countenance appeared to shine with a degree of heavenly radiance; she looked indeed too ethereal—too angelic for this world of wo and wickedness, and her prophetic words struck upon my heart: I feared that they were but too true. I was kneeling at her feet, perfectly overwhelmed with grief. I could not speak. I could only, unmanned as I was, weep forth my sorrow; at this moment, most unexpectedly, Gabrielli entered the apartment—and what a scene ensued! His rage and fury knew no bounds. He then, for the first time, felt convinced that I loved Rosalie. He ordered me from her presence, and with bitter imprecations commanded me never to enter his doors again; never henceforth to address my sweet friend, but with the cold restraint of a stranger; and here I am, heart-broken, without one comfort left on earth, but the prospect of meeting her in public, watched by the eye of malice and distrust, which renders our intercourse restricted to the most formal terms. Still I have the bliss of seeing her, I gaze upon that countenance I love so well, and my heart is not yet quite crushed—quite withered. I wander for hours, when it is too dark for me to be observed, before the house which contains my treasure; my mind too is soled by sometimes meeting Johnson, and through that medium receiving messages of affection from the idol of my heart."

I shook my head in dismay; the case, indeed seemed hopeless; and how was I to proceed? what steps could I take to assist my poor protegee? The only chance I saw for her was the plan she had once before so successfully pursued; it was again to assume the firmness which had so completely intimidated, and, in a degree, conquered, the Italian; but Arturo told me that months of continual ex-

citement and suffering, had almost totally subdued her spirit, and her weakened health rendered her quite unequal to cope with the united persecution which assailed her.

The question now was how to gain access to her without making it appear from whom I had gained my information. See her I must, and would. Arturo advised me to go to Laffeur, and obtain Gabrielli's address from him; at length it was decided that this should be my first step. I felt that already Arturo's heart was lightened; it was no small degree of comfort to him, to be assured by me that he could not visit me too often; in short, that I expected to see him every day. With the freedom of an attached friend, I inquired into his pecuniary resources, and was glad to find he was to have a lucrative engagement at the Opera. But to his own wants he appeared indifferent; reckless was he of every consideration save the one absorbing, wholly engrossing feeling of his ardent heart. In vain I besought him to consider his own prospects; he said he had none—they were all directed to one point, and when that was over, his existence would be a dreary blank—he should no longer have even energy left to live.

It was very affecting and beautiful to witness this extraordinary devotion in these days of selfishness and luxury, when the indulgence of every appetite is the sole and ceaseless aim of the young men of the present age, who allow clubs, horse-racing, and the gaming-table, added to all other sensual gratifications, to supersede the natural and much to be admired affections of the heart. In these degenerate and unromantic times, matrimony is rarely associated with any other idea, save that of aggrandizement, so that the disinterested, unselfish attachment of the young Italian was to me like a dream of olden times, when love and chivalry were the burden of the song. He seemed to love Rosalie the more ardently for her very sufferings. Oh! how truly I felt for him: although I saw at once, poor youth, that his case was desperate.

In my present state of mind, I could fain have believed in all that is sung and said of broken hearts, and have repeated in the words of the poet:—

"I never heard,
Of any true affection, but 'twas nipt
With care, that like the caterpillar eats
The leaves of the spring's sweetest book, the rose."

I went instantly to the manager and received the direction I required. It was truly a most disreputable street in which Gabrielli had taken up his abode; thither I bent my steps; I knocked and a dirty maid servant opened the door.

"Is Miss Elton at home?" I inquired.

"No," was the answer.

"Then I must see Signor Gabrielli." He also was not within, and Madame Gabrielli was too ill to see any one.

"Then," I persisted, "I wish to speak to Johnson."

The woman looked confused, and was hesitating how she might still persevere in her falsehoods, when all farther trouble was spared by the sudden appearance of Rosalie herself, who rushed down the stair-case, and flew into my arms.

My well known voice had reached her ear, and, regardless of the opposition of the odious Myrtille, who in vain endeavoured to prevent her escape, she had burst from her, and sought the only refuge—the only comfort she could feel on earth—that

of finding herself in the arms of her fond, old friend!

She had no power of utterance, poor girl; she could only sob whilst she hung upon my neck; but this was for a brief moment; we were not permitted to remain uninterrupted. A woman whom I immediately recognized as Myrtille, appeared; she was evidently labouring under great excitement of feeling, in other words she was in a violent passion and vociferated in Italian: "This is all very improper, Signora Rosalie. You know how strict were your orders that no one should be admitted to disturb your very important studies. My brother will be very angry at this disobedience to his commands."

I expostulated with the woman, and strove to soothe her ire, although I felt, Heaven forgive me, much more inclined to precipitate her from the top to the bottom of the stairs, upon which she stood, gesticulating in an accent, to my ear, peculiarly harsh and disagreeable.

"Might I not," I said, "enter some apartment, where I could have some conversation with Miss Elton?"

She replied: "No, certainly not, unless she were also present; she had received the most positive orders from Signor Gabrielli."

"Very well," I said, "so let it be;" and following her I led my poor weeping girl into a parlour, where, with looks of fury, the Signora accompanied us.

This creature seemed to be little more than thirty years of age; she might be considered handsome, but to me her countenance was like that of a demon, and her rouged cheeks rendered her fierce black eyes still more bold and piercing! Merciful heaven!—what a companion for this unfortunate girl, whom I saw trembling in every limb.

I made her sit down by me, and then whispered the question, whether Myrtille understood English.

She answered, "No."

This was so far fortunate; at least I hoped to gain some information from her, but she appeared paralyzed by fear, as this horrid woman sat opposite to her with her large fiery orbs fixed full upon her countenance.

I felt my anger rise to an insupportable degree. I turned to Rosalie, and in Italian, begged her to leave me for a few moments, that I might have some conversation with her companion. She instantly rose, and quitted the apartment. Then I felt that I scarcely knew how I was to proceed; whether by a strong effort, to check my passion, and endeavour to conciliate the woman, or to give way to the rage with which, I am ashamed to say, my whole soul was shaken. We were both silent for a minute, but I was soon roused by the sound of her unmusical voice:

"*Che volete da me, Signore?*"

I replied, "As a friend of Rosalie, I must, without hesitation, tell you, that you are acting most unwisely, and marring your own interests, or rather those of your employer. What is your motive for wishing to withhold from her any intercourse with the friends of her infancy? It is not my desire to interfere with Gabrielli's prospects for her; my only anxiety is to smooth the road of duty, which the peculiar manner in which she has been brought up, and her extreme sensibility, render, perhaps, more irksome than it might otherwise have been."

* "What is your business with me, sir?"

"Pshaw! nonsense!" she replied. "Sensibility! indeed;—say obstinacy! She is the most wilful, tiresome girl with whom I have ever had to deal—the most difficult to manage. The trouble and patience Gabrielli has had with her is not to be imagined: think of the expense he has bestowed upon her education! and now, at this critical moment, when she is just about to make her debut, what with her sensibility and hysterics, and her affectation of propriety, if we do not take care, she will be a failure after all, and then God knows what will be the consequence!"

"Perhaps," thought I: "it might be her salvation!"

She proceeded rapidly and loudly—"Gabrielli wished to keep her away from her friends,—I, more properly, call them her enemies—that her nerves may be kept as tranquil as possible. To what has she to look but her profession, I should like to know?—and what splendid prospects are hers, if she chooses to make proper use of her extraordinary talents—foolish absurd girl!"

I tried to argue with the creature; and, at last, I think gained a little ground by declaring that my influence would rather second their wishes than frustrate them—that I had not come with any view of withdrawing Rosalie from her profession, and I endeavoured to persuade her, that by allowing her free intercourse with me, I was certain both her health and spirits would be improved, and that she would be in a much more favourable state to appear before the public than she now was.

I perceived that my words were beginning to have some effect; but, oh! how my heart recoiled at the idea of thus temporising with this odious woman! I felt that I ought to have denounced her at once—at once to have shown how I detested her conduct. But I had a strong motive for my actions—the endeavour to save from destruction a soul as pure, as excellent, as the other was faulty and corrupt.

When Myrtille recovered in a measure from her fit of anger, she became communicative, and informed me that she had left a lucrative engagement at the Opera, at Milan, to superintend the theatrical education of Rosalie. She gave me also to understand, that it was a great sacrifice, and that it was solely out of regard to Gabrielli, who, she said, "had always been the kindest of brothers!"

In answer to my questions concerning Madame Gabrielli, she related a very distressing account. She said that her complaint was a cancer, and that the worst result was anticipated.

I begged that I might see her; but at this proposition another dark cloud appeared upon the countenance of the Signora; however, after a pause of consideration, she desired me to follow her, and I was soon in the presence of the unhappy woman.

I found her in the drawing-room. At her feet knelt poor Rosalie, with her head buried upon her mother's knee. It was an affecting sight!—the poor creature was changed in a surprising degree, pain and sorrow had sharpened her features, and a yellow sickly tinge overspread her whole aspect. Johnson was standing near them, with a countenance which indicated how fully she had participated in all the misery of the mother and daughter!

"What foolery is all this?" cried Myrtille, as she entered the apartment; "no wonder my brother is averse to your meeting your friends, if such scenes are to be performed for their amusement! Rise, Rosalie, and compose yourself, or, depend

upon it, this will be the last time I shall interfere in your behalf."

How I longed to silence the audacious woman! but I restrained myself, approached the poor girl, raised her from her kneeling posture and whispered words of consolation in her ear. Poor Madame Gabrielli stretched out her emaciated hand to me, and said, in a low tone of voice, "I deserve all this, but that poor child;—what is to be done for her?—you must never abandon her, for now is the moment she requires your protection more than ever."

An expressive glance from me seemed to afford comfort to her mind. I then asked her some questions respecting herself; what she told me, conveyed the impression that her case was a very bad one. She had scarcely any medical attendance; I promised to send my own surgeon to see her, and said that I would be answerable for the expense.

Our conversation could not flow with much freedom, for, although Myrtila did not understand English, her shrewd scrutinizing eyes, which were fixed upon us, appeared as if they pierced into our very thoughts. I saw, however, that it was a consolation to Rosalie and her mother even to behold me—to feel that one so deeply interested in their cause was near them. On taking my leave I told them to be comforted, for I was certain matters would improve. I then again requested Myrtila to let me speak with her alone.

I told her that I relied upon her good offices to induce Gabrielli to allow me to have free access to Rosalie; and also mentioned my intention of sending medical advice to Madame Gabrielli. At this last proposition, the woman shrugged up her shoulders and sneered, and, with a fiend-like expression of countenance, said it was of no use spending money on such a hopeless business; "for when was a cancer ever cured?" she added, with a contemptuous toss of the head.

I said, that in many instances an operation had effected a remedy.

"Very well!" she replied; "do as you will, it does not signify to me, if she had every surgeon in the universe—I only spoke to save your money."

I left the house, but with a load upon my heart: indeed, I felt with Johnson, that there are many things worse to bear than the death of those we love; and, oh! the idea of the sweet girl I had just quitted, resting, in all her purity and goodness, with the green sod of her favourite church-yard over her, would be much less painful than the thought of leaving her, as I now did, in such society—with so many evils darkening around her.

CHAPTER XV.

It is my desire to be as little tedious as possible to my readers; old people are often accused of being tiresome, therefore I will endeavour to escape that accusation, and pass over many little minor events, which, otherwise, I would willingly record and at once briefly say, that Gabrielli was induced—solely, however, from selfish considerations, to relax in his severity towards Rosalie. He at length perceived that her health and spirits were so completely failing her that some great change must be effected before she could gain sufficient energy to make those exertions which would render her *debut* as brilliant and successful as he anticipated.

I was surprised one morning by his calling upon me, and all his servile urbanity of manner seemed to have returned. He told me that I was quite mistaken if I thought he wished to debar his dear and charming daughter from enjoying the happiness of my society, that from me, he felt certain, she was always deriving advantage; it would be a comfort to him to afford her the power of taking that exercise and recreation, of which, from his various avocations, and the ill-health of her mother, she would be otherwise deprived. He farther added, that in a fortnight she would probably make her appearance on the stage, and of course much practice and study were required; but all he wished was that she should devote some hours to this necessary duty; the rest of the day was at her own disposal; and the man finished his harangue by saying he was quite sure he could rely upon me to impress upon her mind the necessity of obedience and exertion! it was only from the knowledge of my discretion and wisdom that he ventured to confide so implicitly to my direction a girl so wayward and impracticable.

I could have answered him—but, for the sake of the unhappy girl, I determined to be silent, and from this hour her condition materially improved.

It was now the beginning of spring; the season was peculiarly mild and forward, and as it suited Rosalie's avocations to take an early walk, I was constantly at her door soon after eight o'clock. With what exquisite delight did she hail my appearance, and how completely like a bird just escaped from its hated cage did she fly into the fresh air!—and her step—how elastic it became! as she gradually felt herself getting more and more distant from her detested home! whilst she leant with all the confiding love of a daughter upon my arm, the joy of the moment seemed to clear away the clouds which sorrow had gathered on her brow.

I have always thought that griefs, however heavy, appear to lose much of their oppressive weight when we are under the influence of the fresh air of heaven,—so it was with Rosalie. It was curious and delightful to watch the change that took place in her countenance, in the course of a very short time: she had indeed, much to tell me that was distressing, but I endeavoured to check the flow of her complaints and to make as light of every thing as possible.

There was one subject upon which I soon discovered that she was peculiarly unhappy;—it was the idea of having to go to the theatre without any chaperone more respectable than Myrtila.

"Had my poor mother," she said, "been in a state to accompany me, it would have been more bearable. I should then have known that there was one to whom I could look for support; I should have felt that there was at least a semblance of respectability remaining to me; but now I shudder with horror at the thoughts of what I shall be exposed to, with no one to whom I can fly for refuge; this is one of the most aggravated tortures I endure. The rehearsals as yet have been as private as possible, but still, even at them, what have I not suffered? I felt that I inhaled an atmosphere of impurity. I did not see one countenance, save that of dear Arturo, from which I could extract any thing like comfort, and to him, poor fellow, I dared not speak; but I saw that he was watching me with the keen eye of painful anxiety; this adds to my nervousness, for, with his fiery impetuous feelings, I am constantly dreading some explosion of his anger, should he once perceive that any circumstance

had annoyed me. Mr. Leslie," she continued, turning towards me, and taking my hand, while she bent her expressive eyes with a look of intensity upon mine, as she spoke, "there is only one circumstance which could sustain me through my trial in the dreadful hour of my first appearance, and this is *your* supporting presence; it would be to me every thing—strength and succour."

Here she paused, but her wild distended eye was still fixed upon me with an expression of fearful impatience.

What could I say? With the swiftness of thought it flashed across my mind that her proposition was of a most perplexing nature; the idea of a man of my sacred profession taking upon himself, the office of appearing night after night, within the pestilential precincts of the *coulisses*, to witness tamely, and without rebuke, scenes of flagrant profligacy and vice!

At this view of the subject, I was about to say, it must not—cannot be—but then again, the sweet pure being who leant with such confiding affection upon my arm—might not it be to her, as she had so emphatically said—succour, in that time of need?

The thought, that I should be hovering near her at that trying moment, seemed her only remaining hope. I, therefore, told her I would consider her request, and endeavour, if possible, to comply with it.

"I know what you feel," she replied, "I can enter into all the scruples which suggest themselves to you, but," she exclaimed, in that excited manner which always made me tremble, "remember, it is to save one amongst the wretched group you will meet there, for I now declare solemnly my conviction, that if I go alone to that hated place, defenceless—unprotected, my brain will not be able to stand it; Mr. Leslie, the very idea makes it burn, and my senses become confused."

I tried to speak, but she interrupted me and continued in a vehement manner, "Why should you hesitate? your profession, I know, forbids your entering those scenes of sin and folly into which my evil destiny casts me; still there are motives, high and holy motives, which may render laudable your mingling with the most depraved. You have a trust—a work to do; the very profession which makes you shrink from following your poor desolate Rosalie to that place of lawlessness and mockery, the very thought of which makes her soul sicken with alarm and disgust, surely bids you not hesitate! Nothing, nothing can be a degradation to you, dear Mr. Leslie," she continued, with a volubility and gentle sophistry, which made me see how completely her heart was bent on persuading me to her wishes, "would you hesitate in following the humblest of your parishioners at dear Fairbourne when you knew your presence would protect, your influence guard them from surrounding pollution? Surely then you will not forsake your own Rosalie; she who has loved and venerated you so long and so truly," and she pressed both her hands upon my arm with all the tender earnestness of a child. "Not that I fear their vices," she continued with a haughty tone, on my still hesitating to reply to her, "they never can touch me; but," she added, shuddering—"there is a crime which haunts my imagination—which a demon seems to whisper in my ear, when amidst those people, and which tells me I could, *I can* free myself from their hateful contact—had I but courage, *I can be free*," she repeated with the loud laugh which was so horrible to hear, whilst she still pressed on my arm more closely, and looked into my face with eyes that al-

most dazzled me by their brilliancy, while their dilated pupils gave strong indications of mental disorder. "Whilst you are with me, the demon never appears; he cannot, dare not approach me when you are near; and I feel that even in that dreadful theatre, surrounded by, oh! such women, and men whose very looks terrify me, I shall be as calm as when I used to be seated on my favourite footstool by your side, in that dearly loved study at the rectory, where all around breathed of peace, tranquillity, and goodness."

There she paused. The remembrance of that beloved spot, and the days of her past, but never to be forgotten happiness, rushed upon her imagination and immediately gave a turn to her thoughts, her feelings seemed to lose their rigidity and she burst into tears.

These timely drops appeared to sooth her. We were in Kensington Gardens, so I led her to a seat, and allowed her to weep on without interruption. Indeed I thanked heaven for these tears, for they seemed as if they had cooled her brain.

But what feelings of intense anxiety filled my own heart! I trembled at the responsibility I had brought upon myself. I felt that I was placed in a most extraordinary situation; still, when I turned my eyes upon the poor lovely interesting creature who sat beside me, and when I remembered, that in this world I was her only stay, I at once said, "Rosalie, be comforted; in every turn of this eventful world I am yours—I will follow you through life, till death."

"Then may Heaven's will be done!" she cried, with such a rapturous expression of countenance, methinks I see it now! There are looks and words which stamp themselves upon the heart, which are never, never to be forgotten; she continued, "With you at my side, my constant, best of friends, I will no longer shrink from my appointed trial—I will walk firmly through the path, although thorns may be beneath my feet. I can now say, the Almighty has never forsaken me, and that he has sent a blessing and a solace in you, beloved Mr. Leslie, which plainly indicates that his hand is near me—that his eye is upon me; and I have the soothing inward feeling of hope, that through his grace my heavy task will not be lengthened—that there is a rest for me at hand, and that when that blessed time arrives, Rosalie's grave will be an honoured one—a spot which her friends may visit with satisfaction—though, perhaps, mingled with sadness; they will remember that the poor girl sunk into her early resting place with a name untarnished—that through all her trials she disgraced not the kindness of those who cherished her—who made her childhood so blessed. Oh! in all my misery I have moments of exquisite enjoyment; moments when I am living in a world of my own; and the most soothing fabric of my imagination that I then build is to fancy myself dead and buried—in that one spot, you know, Mr. Leslie," she exclaimed quickly and anxiously; "then I imagine the forms of those I love bending over the simple stone their affection has raised to my memory; I hear them pronounce my name, 'Rosalie,' they say—'poor Rosalie!' I see a tear fall from the soft eye of my adored Gertrude, and that tear seems really to drop upon my heart, and to cool one burning spot which ever tortures me—oh! that tear," she repeated, placing her hand upon her eyes, "how often I try to see it—it is the only happiness I have."

I endeavoured to check her, for she was getting into that rambling unconnected manner of talking, which often preceded any great agitation. It was not only painful for me to hear, but I knew it was

injurious to allow her to indulge in such exciting fancies.

It is, perhaps, impossible for my readers to form an adequate conception of the affecting nature of the scene I have just described. The voice of the poor girl was pathos itself, the melody of her tones so exquisite, that the wild language which flowed from her lips seemed like poetic inspiration, so truly was every word mellowed by the sound of the harmonious voice by which they were pronounced.

And then to look upon her from whom they proceeded—that angel in human form! but I must check this rhapsody. It will be considered as the doting raving of an old man!

My only plan now was to rouse her, by telling her that the time was almost exhausted, and that Gabrielli would be angry if she was not home at the appointed hour.

She obeyed me passively, but was silent during the rest of the walk. I promised, when I left her, to be with her early the next morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

Gabrielli happened to be just leaving the house, as I turned to quit it, and, finding that he was proceeding towards the Haymarket, I requested to be allowed to walk that way with him, as I had much to say.

I told him without reserve, how alarmed I was about Rosalie, and warned him, in the most emphatic terms, against doing anything that might agitate her. I begged him to indulge and soothe her, and to contradict her as little as possible.

I saw his countenance evince impatience, but I heeded it not, and went on to mention the request which Rosalie had just urged, that I might attend her to the theatre, and my willingness to comply with it.

He shrugged up his shoulders and I am well aware many an imprecation died away upon his lips; however, I believe that he had at last become convinced that my alarm was not unfounded, and that there was indeed but one means of accomplishing his own views with regard to Rosalie, which was to have recourse to mildness and persuasive kindness. He had discovered that she possessed a spirit which would not bend to tyranny, although her heart might break in the effort. The man, therefore, gave a scowling, reluctant acquiescence, and we parted with no very amicable feeling on either side; indeed, I considered him almost in the light of a common assassin; for had he not already murdered the peace of mind of my child, while at the same time he was sacrificing her life?

This evening I had a long conversation with Arturo; the poor youth was looking wretchedly ill, and there was a degree of languor over his whole appearance that was very striking. His large black eyes had lost their brilliant fire, even his crisp curling locks seemed to have changed their nature, and appeared to hang mournfully round his countenance. When I looked at him, as he stood leaning against the mantel piece, his fine manly form assuming a posture of dejection, I could not help inwardly ejaculating, "Here is another instance of a blighted heart, a living specimen of the ravages which the canker worm of care produces in the human frame."

Although the youth had been nurtured in good-

ness and virtue in an humble sphere, still it was under the warm sky of an Italian climate where every feeling of the heart is heated by its intensity.

The old relation, with whom he had lived from his infancy, kept him much aloof from others of his own age; he lived in strict seclusion; his poverty had placed a barrier between him and the haunts of man; therefore, until his little savings enabled him to give Arturo a few advantages to improve the cultivation of his natural musical genius, the young man's acquaintance with others was very limited.

At length he fell into the society of Rosalie. His tastes seemed formed by her alone—immediately she became the *beauideal* of that perfection sought by his youthful imagination—his night and day dream of grace and beauty—he would never cast his eyes elsewhere to seek for greater charms. His admiration rapidly grew into love, which became too soon the sole hope of his existence.

Through the course of a long life I have witnessed many degrees of strong attachment; but that which glowed with such fervour in the breast of Arturo, was of the most absorbing character; it was particularly affecting to me, for, from what I knew of its hopelessness, I felt that the end must be a tragedy.

To some hearts there are strokes of calamity, which sear and scorch the soul, penetrate to the vital seat of happiness, and blast it, so that it will never again put forth bud or blossom.

And such, I was convinced, would be the case with Arturo.

My heart bled for him, and—perhaps I may be blamed for indiscretion—but for the moment to soothe his trouble, I told him of our intention of being in Kensington Gardens the next morning, and that, if he chose it, he might meet us there.

Had I conferred upon him a principality, his gratitude could not have been more unbounded. With his own natural enthusiasm, he was in an instant at my feet—on his knees, pouring forth every demonstration of thankfulness, covering my withered hand with fervent kisses.

All this exuberance in him did not appear in the least overstrained or unnatural; it was so entirely in character with his usual ardent manner of expressing every emotion which excited him.

Poor fellow! as he knelt before me, and I stroked the soft curls, which grew in such beautiful luxuriance on his finely formed head, with the rapidity of thought, his future career appeared before me, and how little of happiness mingled in the prospect.

How could any one, with such acuteness of feeling as he possessed, find peace on the turbulent waves of this fitful disappointing world!

He left me elated, and comparatively happy. He went to dream of love—full of the bright hope of the morrow, and I remained to muse over the uncertainty and misery which often, with even more than usual pertinacity, seem to pursue the most excellent—the most highly gifted!

But it was not for me, a short-sighted mortal, to arraign the works of Providence. I knew that there was wisdom in every act of Providence. Man, in this mortal state, is not yet fit for happiness. He is not created for perpetual spring and cloudless skies, but by the wintry storm, is called upon to exert himself to felicity hereafter.

CHAPTER XVII.

The next morning dawned brightly. The sun was shining with splendour, the air, even through a London atmosphere, was balmy and refreshing. At a very early hour I was at Rosalie's door, and I found her quite ready, and equipped to join me.

Her appearance agreeably surprised me; for she was very prettily dressed in a new Leghorn bonnet, which I thought became her much, and a handsome silk cloak trimmed with lace. The fact was, kind Lady Belmont had sent a sum of money for me to lay out for her, and I had given a portion of it to Myrtille, to spend for her in necessary dress. I thought it would keep the woman in good temper thus to employ her. I also considered that she would execute this commission better than either myself or Rosalie; and certainly here she had not failed. Every thing was in good taste; and I looked at my dear *protegee* with delight, for I am not one of those, who think that dress cannot improve beauty. I like to see a well-arranged toilette; it is lady-like, besides being becoming;—but to go on with my story, for I have made a most old womanly digression.

We set off upon our walk. I found that Rosalie had something to purchase at a music shop in Bond Street, therefore we bent our steps towards that quarter of the town, previous to proceeding to Kensington Gardens. During our way thither I had much to tell her, which I knew would give her pleasure. I informed her of Gabrielli's acquiescence in my wish of accompanying her on the nights of her performance at the Opera house.

This intelligence did, indeed, give her joy; she had scarcely words to express her gratitude and satisfaction. I then told her who was waiting, I made no doubt, with the utmost impatience for us, in Kensington Gardens.

This was truly delightful news, for although, to her pure mind, the warm feelings of his heart did not meet with the same return, still she loved Arturo affectionately—gratefully; his idea was connected with the only moments of any thing like happiness she had passed in Italy.

In the present nervous state of her spirits, extremes, either of joy or sorrow, appeared to be too much for her, and I almost regretted I had said so much, when I looked at her flushed cheek and fearfully brilliant eye, and heard the hurried manner in which she spoke, and the wild laugh that, ever and anon, broke from her.

As I gazed upon her countenance, I could not help thinking how splendidly beautiful she looked. Her veil was thrown back, and her open bonnet displayed, to full perfection, her lovely face.

As we went up St. James' Street, she was talking rapidly, and with much animation. We passed several clubs, and from one of them issued several young men. Although it was at that time nearly eight o'clock, to judge by their elaborate evening dress, and the pale worn-out expression of their countenances, it was evident their night had but just ended. However, though their appearance bore the traces of hours spent in the dissipation of the gaming table, their spirits were not exhausted, for they were laughing and talking, as they proceeded (I concluded) to their several places of abode, there, in feverish sleep, to steal a few hours from the day, in order to recruit their enervated frames for the orgies of the ensuing night.

They came towards us; but Rosalie, engrossed by the feelings which filled her mind, heeded them not—indeed, I believe she did not even see them.

The young men approached, and I perceived that, with one accord, they turned their eyes upon this unexpected apparition of a well-dressed and respectable female, at such an hour, walking in these precincts. Rude and fixed was their gaze, and the nearer view they gained of my lovely companion, the more intense were the looks of admiration with which they regarded her.

But one of the party seemed to be more than merely casually moved by the sight of Rosalie. He absolutely gave a start of surprise, and, instead of proceeding with his companions, stood motionless, immediately before us, so that he completely obstructed our passage.

Then, for the first time, Rosalie's eyes fell upon him, but it did not appear that in any way she recognized him. He, however, seemed fascinated to the spot. My anger began to rise at the extreme impertinence of his conduct; my looks, I think, plainly indicated my feelings, for suddenly, he slightly, but respectfully, touched his hat and passed on; curiosity, however, inducing me to turn my head, I saw him standing and staring after us.

Rosalie made no remark upon this occurrence; indeed, her pre-occupied mind prevented her taking any heed of what had struck me as being somewhat extraordinary. We proceeded to the gardens without meeting with any farther impediment, and there we found the happy, impatient Arturo, waiting for us with breathless anxiety.

He held in his hands, as an offering to the lady of his love, the most splendid bouquet I had ever beheld, consisting of the choicest flowers; he certainly must have been up before day-break, to have procured it, and, for which, I could not help thinking, he had drained the last *sozz* from his scanty purse.

My readers may imagine the happiness of this meeting—all that was to be said on both sides. This, probably, was one of the most delightful moments of the poor young man's life, and, in the light thoughtlessness of youth, he forgot all his miseries—all the wretchedness he had endured.

“There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him; he had looked
Upon it till it would not pass away;
He had no breath, no being, but in hers;
She was his voice,—he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words; she was his sight,
For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers,
Which coloured all his objects: he had ceased
To live within himself: she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all!”

His eye kindled with its former brightness;—his countenance glowed, and, for a brief space, he looked again the happy, heedless youth, whose beauty had astonished me on my first arrival at Naples.

Quickly did the time pass, and loth was I to disturb such joyful moments; but my watch warned me that it was near the hour that Rosalie should return. However, to soften the parting to Arturo, I promised him, that the pleasure he had this morning enjoyed should often be repeated. He was to accompany us across the Park, and then we were to part.

As we were proceeding towards the Cumberland gate, we almost came in contact with a regiment of the life Guards, which was returning to the barracks at Knightsbridge after a field day.

It seemed as if this morning, we were fated to meet with adventures. Several officers on horse-

back, attracted in the same manner as bees are towards some beautiful flower, hovered close to us, to obtain a nearer view of my lovely companion; and I began to be provoked with the dress she wore this day, which, I fancied, rendered her attractions more than usually conspicuous.

Amongst these gazers, I most unexpectedly beheld Lord Henry de Vere. I then recollected he had lately obtained a commission in one of the regiments of the household cavalry.

The group of officers having stared at Rosalie as long and as fixedly as in decency they could, rode on towards the troops, which were now some short distance in advance; but Lord Henry, unsatiated with the sight of the loveliness that had so attracted him, turned again to look upon her, and at that moment caught my eye.

He came up to me immediately. "Mr. Leslie!" he exclaimed, "who could have expected to have seen you here, at such a time—and in such company?" he whispered, as he leant forward upon his horse, and looked significantly at Rosalie, whom, I evidently perceived, he did not in the least remember.

I felt annoyed, for I had not wished to have introduced Rosalie to any of the younger branches of the Belmont family, until sanctioned by their parents; there was something inwardly that told me I had better not do so; I rather dreaded the encounter.

"Who, in the name of every thing that is beautiful! is she?" again whispered the young Lord. "I am perfectly expiring with impatience to know, for I never saw such a lovely creature in the whole course of my life!"

And most truly, at that moment, might Lord Henry so express himself, for, on turning my eyes towards the young girl, I saw her standing with her large, full, bright orbs fixed upon the young man—her colour raised to the brightest carnation—her faultless mouth half unclosed, and, as she bent forward, her bosom heaving with surprise, agitation, and tender recognition—I thought certainly I had never seen a living spectacle of any thing so exquisitely bewitching!

I had now no other course to pursue, but at once to say—"Do you not remember Rosalie?" In an instant he had vaulted from his horse, the bridle of which he threw towards me, and, in another second, I saw him clasping her in his arms, with all the tender welcome of a most affectionate brother; and Rosalie, with tears streaming from her eyes, suffered, indeed returned, the caresses of this early friend, and play-fellow of her childhood.

But, I perceived, that after this first burst of surprised emotion was over—when Lord Henry again looked upon the lovely creature he had so unconsciously accosted—he began to feel the difference which time had made in her age, appearance and situation.

The colour rose to his cheeks as he turned towards her, and said, in a more constrained manner—"Rosalie, you must forgive my bluntness. I ought, perhaps, to apologize;—but, good heavens!" he exclaimed, relapsing into the former freedom of past days, "when I heard your name, I thought only of my coal-black Rose—my little favourite and play-fellow of the white cottage. You are grown so tall! Who could have imagined that the little, short, sallow girl, could ever be such as you now are! Beautiful Rosalie!—no longer, indeed, the coal-black Rose, but the most perfect—the most lovely of blush roses!" and he gazed upon her with unfeigned admiration, whilst she blushed, but from pleasure—not from shame!

And where was the young Italian all this time? I actually started when I turned from the pleasing scene I have been describing, and saw him standing with his eyes also fixed upon it, but with all the fiercest passions of his soul, gleaming in the expression of his now darkened countenance. He stood with his hand pressed upon his heart, in an attitude which seemed in unison with his whole bearing, and I could have imagined that he was feeling for a stiletto, in the true Italian style, which he would fain have plunged into the heart of the presumptuous youth, who dared thus to approach the idol of his soul.

It was a striking spectacle; and the extraordinary contrast, presented by the two youths, was worthy the pencil of an artist. They were both, in their separate aspects, rare specimens of the different characteristics of the two countries. The dark fierce beauty of the Italian, contrasted strangely with the slender, tall, graceful, aristocratic-looking Englishman, whose soft blue eyes, as they rested upon Rosalie—his clear fair forehead, shaded by auburn locks, told of a life of hitherto unprovoked passions—of an existence carefully nurtured in the lap of indulgence and luxury. Tempered by the favoured clime in which he had drawn his first breath, his feelings, though warm, still were not as yet flaming with the raging fire which blazed in the very soul of Arturo, whose passions were like the ardent sun, beneath which he had existed ever since his birth.

I kept my eye steadfastly fixed upon him, and soon saw that the respect, and even the degree of awe which he felt towards me, alone restrained him. I believe, otherwise, he would have rushed forward to chastise the daring intruder, who had presumed thus familiarly to address Rosalie. But he saw that I sanctioned his advances, and the pleasure which sparkled in her eye evinced, to his jealous sight, that the joy she felt also was extreme.

I watched him as he stood for some moments irresolute—in a state of the greatest agitation. At last I saw a large tear swell in his eye, as with a softened look he gazed on Rosalie; but in another instant a frown succeeded, and with an impetuous gesture, he flung the flowers he held in his hand, upon the ground, and darting off in an opposite direction, unperceived, except by me, was soon out of sight.

I did not seek to detain him, for what good could result from bringing these two impetuous youths in contact with each other! All I had to do was to pick up the unoffending bouquet, the loss of which I knew Rosalie would deplore, and comfort myself by the determination of afterwards finding Arturo, and by explaining to him who Lord Henry was, endeavour to calm his tortured mind.

Lord Henry seemed in no haste to leave us. With the bridle of his charger under his arm, he walked with us for some distance, and, indeed, it was only when I told him that he really must go, that he reluctantly took his departure; not, however, before he had showered every kind of question upon Rosalie—where she was to be found? when he might hope to see her again? and all sorts of inquiries, which might lead to bring about another meeting.

She knew not what to say. Her soul revolted against the idea of receiving him at her wretched and disreputable home. I endeavoured to come to her relief, by telling him that she was not mistress of her own actions, that Gabrielli allowed no visitors—that when Lady Belmont arrived, I hoped to be able to bring her to see them. He then asked when she was to make her first appearance, and

at this question, poor Rosalie began to weep; it recalled to her mind every circumstance which was to her 'most painful—her degraded position! and then Lord Henry was all sorrow, all penitence, for having said any thing that could have caused her tears to flow. In short, this interview I foresaw would much distress Rosalie, and I resolved, at length, to terminate it by calling a coach, and putting her into it; thus we got rid of our unfortunate, though affectionate young friend.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The young man who had so unceremoniously stared at Rosalie in the street, proved to be the identical Sir Francis Somerville, who has already appeared before my readers, as one of the *dramatis personæ* of my tale, and who was so struck and captivated by the beauty of a young girl whom he accidentally met on the Esplanade at Brighton. This girl, I need scarcely add, was no other than our Rosalie. Gabrielli had landed at that port, on his way from Italy, and the illness of his wife detained them there for some days. The vivid impression which Rosalie's loveliness had made upon the two young men, was easily detected by the experienced eye of Myrtille, who, on advancing to meet her, observed the whole of the little scene occasioned by the dispersion of the music which Rosalie held in her hand, and perceived that the subsequent agitation of our heroine seemed to strengthen the fascination which her appearance had wrought upon their senses.

Myrtille communicated all this to Gabrielli; and it had so chanced that in the morning he also, whilst standing in a shop, had recognized the person of Lord Fitz-Ernest, who was passing at the time.

The Italian had always peculiarly dreaded the interference of this young man. There was something in his dignified demeanour, which awed the ruffian. He, therefore, immediately resolved to lose no time in leaving Brighton, in as private a manner as possible, in order to avoid any meeting. Thus it was, that the pursuit of the two young men had been so completely baffled. However, the impression Rosalie had made upon the imagination of Sir Francis was so durable, that even after a considerable lapse of time, when he met her in St. James's Street, his senses exhausted and fatigued by the past vigils of the night—his head confused by the copious draughts of iced champagne, to which he had constantly flown for support, under all the harassing chances of the hazard table—still he recognised her in a moment, and seemed at once sobered and recalled to himself, by the reappearance of the vision, which had so long haunted his fancy.

Had it not been for his evening dress, he would no doubt have retraced his steps and followed her—so intensely anxious was he to discover who, and what she was. I suppose my silver locks, and sable suit appeared to give a warrant to her respectability—to say nothing of a ray of innate purity which seemed to emanate from the expression of her sweet countenance. But still, in his own mind, he felt certain that there was some mystery attached to her, which, to fathom, he would at that moment have staked a great deal; but at present he had no other course to pursue, but to return to his bachelor home in Hill Street, and there endeavour to recruit his feverish frame by sleep and rest.

It suggested itself to him, during the operation of undressing, that his servant, who was an old and well tried assistant in all his pleasures, might be able to help him in his present dilemma. But no—how could he? there was not the slightest clue whatever to the discovery. He must even leave it to chance—to his usual lucky stars. He would watch at the club door every day, at the same hour in which he had met the beauteous unknown, as long as the season lasted; on that point he was quite determined, but whilst ruminating upon this, as well as upon many other plans, equally absurd, he fell fast asleep, dreaming, of course, of the lovely form which had thus disturbed his peace of mind, although, in his visions, she might appear to him sometimes perchance with my clerical shovel-hat upon her head.

It so happened, that night, there was a state ball at St. James's Palace, and although our Baronet never went to such amusements, if he could possibly avoid them, his clubs having far greater charms for him, he was obliged to attend the command of his sovereign, and there he met the young Lord Henry de Vere.

Sir Francis was intimately acquainted with the Belmont family; indeed, he was very nearly connected with it; and though, from his dissipated habits, the Marquis and Marchioness had hoped their sons would not be thrown much into his society, circumstances had frustrated this wish, and the cousins had been a great deal together.

The two young men were standing rather apart from the rest of the company, both silent and abstracted. I believe, from what I have since heard, that their thoughts were equally engrossed by the same subject. Lord Henry, I am certain, was thinking, as he cast his eyes upon the brilliant beauties that floated before him, radiant in dress and diamonds, that with all their external advantages, there was not one to compare to the splendid loveliness of the interesting creature he had seen that morning, and his mind was dwelling with dangerous fervour on each lovely feature of that bewitching countenance. He blushed—yes—more than once, when he remembered how he had folded her in his arms—how freely he had pressed kiss after kiss upon her cheek. Could he ever dare to do so again? No! he felt that indeed he dared not. He had accosted her as the little Rosalie of bygone days; but now—he sighed, and there was much of bitterness in the sigh, when the conviction—the too great certainty—flashed across his mind, that never again might he consider her in that light; an inward pang, at that moment, suggested to him, that for his safety, he ought never to look on her again.

And Sir Francis—what was the subject of his meditation, as he stood, moodily, with his arms folded, and his brow contracted?

We had, perhaps, better not endeavour to ascertain his inward aspirations. A life of profligacy and self-indulgence had probably rendered them less amiable than those of the young Lord, who was still fresh and uninitiated in the ways of sin. Sir Francis had lived a short life of pleasure, and had now almost exhausted its resources. Abundance of wealth had hitherto procured for him every gratification, but still he was not satisfied.

When we enter a gay and festive assembly, we behold every appearance of sparkling felicity. Alas! if we could look into the hearts of this seemingly joyous company, how inconsiderable a portion would be found truly happy. At the best, the flashes of mirth, which burst from the dissipated and careless, are of a transient and broken kind, interrupted by

reflections they cannot avoid. But a truce to moralizing.

The appearance of Rosalie was a new incitement to Sir Francis, and, as is always the case, the difficulties which appeared to surround his farther acquaintance with her, quickened his anxiety upon the subject. At that moment, all his possessions seemed inadequate to his present wants. What was the use of youth, health, riches, if they could not procure happiness? there must be always something wanting to complete it.

The meditations of both the young men were interrupted by a group of other loungers, who joined them, and Sir Francis was thus accosted by one of the party:

"What is the matter with you to-night, Somerville? you look completely floored. However, I don't wonder at it, for I never saw a man so perfectly cleaned out, as you were last night, at Crocky's. I left you the loser of—I dare not say how much, and I hear you were there till the middle of the next day. I suppose that makes you look so lackadaisical."

"Really," replied Sir Francis, drawing up his tall figure to its utmost height, and looking very stern and dignified, "I cannot imagine what concern you can have in my losses; pray be so good as to leave my proceedings alone."

"Come, don't be in a rage, my good fellow, and I will tell you a piece of news which will brighten you up. What do you think of my having, by the very utmost stroke of good fortune, gained a sight of the new prima donna; and, by all that's divine! she is the most beautiful creature my eyes ever looked upon."

"Do not torment me, Templeton," replied Sir Francis, half turning away; "I know, pretty well, the style of your beauties, with their red cheeks, flaxen locks, and staring blue eyes. I suppose she is the fac-simile of the fat Columbine who robbed you of your heart, last winter."

"Well, you need not be so bitter in your remarks upon her; if she did not suit your taste, there were many who thought her a devilish fine girl. And I have a good mind, just to punish you for your impertinence towards the pretty Fanny, to give you no farther information upon the subject of this new star, whose brilliancy would, I am certain, dazzle even your well practised eye."

"Well, come, I'll give you leave to tell me all about her," said Sir Francis, his features now relaxing into a smile; "for I see you are bursting to communicate all you know; and, to bribe you to smooth your features, which I see I have ruffled, I will say that, after all, Fanny is not so very fat, nor so extremely blowsy, but exactly the sort of beauty I could have imagined most likely to captivate Augustus Templeton, Esq., just caught fresh from the county of Tipperary."

The young man would have fain walked fairly off, evidently nettled at this ironical speech; but Sir Francis, whose curiosity was now raised, laughingly caught him by the arm, and held him fast. After a little persuasion and coaxing, he at length restored him to good humour, and brought him again upon the subject of the prima donna which appeared to be certainly the uppermost idea in his empty head.

"Well," he said, "you know Lafleur makes a monstrous fuss about any one being admitted at the rehearsals, just at this moment, for there are two debutantes, who he expects will produce a greater sensation than ever yet has been made on the English boards. One is a man, who is to play the principal parts—the other, a girl, whose voice is

more than divine—something beyond your comprehension, Sir Francis."

"Doubtless, I do not pretend to be such an exquisite connoisseur as yourself, Mr. Templeton; but pray go on with your story, for I am in haste to be off."

"Well, the other morning, on passing the Opera-house, a sort of determination seized upon me that I would get in, by hook or by crook. I was refused in every possible manner, which only made me the more resolved to gain my point. So, at last, I found a man I know something of, a kind of understrapper about the theatre, and gave him all the money I had in my pocket to get me in; and he smuggled me into a box, where I sat behind a curtain, just peeping out, now and then, for I dared not, for my life, have been seen. For my sins, I had to wait an immense time, while they were rehearsing some other opera, and I could see nothing but the old set—of whom I am heartily sick."

"Come, get on," said Sir Francis, impatiently, "what a proxy way you have of telling a story."

"I must tell it in my own way, or not at all," replied Templeton, pompously; he saw that he had excited the curiosity of Somerville, therefore it was his turn to give himself airs; so he continued in his own tiresome manner:

"At last, the stupid thing was over, and they commenced "*Nina Pazzo*," the piece in which, I believe, the new *cantatrice* is to make her appearance. I sat upon tenter hooks, scarcely daring to breathe, lest they should discover me, and drag me out before this new divinity appeared; at length she came."

"Well!" exclaimed Sir Francis, and also Lord Henry who had approached, and was listening with the most earnest attention.

"At first, I was disappointed; I hardly thought her so very beautiful, for she was as pale as a marble statue; but the more I looked at her, the more she seemed to kindle into life, and the lovelier she became; such eyes, Somerville! certainly not like my poor Fanny's; they were dark and large, with an expression in them which thrilled through every nerve in my system—it was really like a shock of electricity. After she had sung some time, with a voice like that of a syren, her colour began to rise, and no tint of any rose that ever grew, could excel the beauty of its hue."

"And her figure," demanded Somerville, "is she tall or short?"

"Rather tall and slender, but gracefulness itself."

"And her name? for I forget it, although it has been announced."

"They call her the Signora Rosalia Gabrielli; but I can tell you that even from the cursory view I had of the girl, it seems to me that she will be no easy conquest, Master Somerville; and my friend who got me in, told me that she is an odd young lady, distant and repulsive to the utmost pitch; she refuses to open her lips, except to sing; and, beautiful as she is, no one dares to speak to her; there is a flash in her eye which keeps every one aloof. However, I think she may be a sly one, for I saw her cast *les yeux doux* upon that handsome young fellow who sings with her; indeed they seemed to act the lovers, *con amore*. I'll tell you what, we shall all die of envy of this Vivaldi, who is as splendid a personification of beauty as the girl; all the women's heads in London will be turned by him; and men with light hair will have no chance," here he passed his fingers through his own locks, which grew in profusion, but were of that colour which partakes of the suspicious hue of

ginger; "however, I have found out a mode of getting introduced to her, for I used to know in Italy the sister of this very Gabrielli. She was then a chorus-singer at San Carlos, but is now living with her brother, as a kind of companion or chaperone to the beauty; and you will see, if I am not soon her favoured admirer. But what, in the name of all that is wonderful, is the matter with you, De Vere; you look so fierce and so much offended! Are you already jealous, even before you have seen the fair one?"

"Pardon me," replied Lord Henry, most laughingly, fire flashing from his eyes, "there you are in error. I have known the young lady, with whose name you have taken such gross liberties, from her childhood; she was educated with my sisters, and were it not for the misfortune of her mother having married Gabrielli, she would not have been thus exposed to insult; as it is, her position is not such as to level her to the grade of other women of her hated profession; therefore, Mr. Templeton, I must insist that, at least, before me, you will henceforth use more discretion when you name the Signora Rosalie, or I, as the friend of her youth, shall consider myself bound to resent the outrage;" with these words he walked away, and soon disappeared amidst the throng, leaving the others surprised by this sudden burst of anger.

CHAPTER XIX.

When Lord Henry left the brilliant assembly, his heart was filled with a crowd of mixed feelings, which were both painful and undefinable. He was almost inclined to play the woman, and weep, when he thought of the poor girl, as she had been in past days, and contrasted her present degraded, unhappy condition, with the blissful period, when she was the cherished friend of his sweet sister Gertrude, the indulged, the favoured pet of the whole of his excellent and virtuous family. He recollected her in the joyful thoughtless days of their childhood, and her merry laugh seemed to ring upon his ears; the scenes so loved of his own dear home at Belmont—all appeared to rise before his imagination, and his affectionate young heart was heavy.

As he slowly bent his steps towards Knightsbridge, (for the night was so lovely, that he dismissed his cab,) thought after thought occurred to his fancy, but they all turned to one point—it was the fair image of Rosalie which haunted him; and how his heart smote him, when he recollected that he, who would now have laid down his life to serve her, had often caused her tears to flow; when in past days with his mischievous tricks—his tormenting antics, her enduring patience had been sometimes overtaxed, and then the sweet forgiving manner, with which she ever received his overtures of reconciliation. "Poor beautiful Rosalie!" was his inward sigh; "and now she is wretched, forced to pursue a course which is hateful to her—ill-treated—exposed to insult continually."

His blood boiled with indignation, when he remembered the words of Templeton, and more than once did he turn, with the intention of retracing his steps, to execute summary vengeance upon the contemptible wretch, who had in such a manner dared to name her.

The loveliness of her appearance had made a vivid impression upon the mind of Lord Henry, and most certainly much increased every feeling of interest which already had found a place in his

heart; and torturing—maddening was it to hear her pure name banded by a profligate, and ranked amongst those unfortunates who had forfeited all claim to respectability. To think that the chosen friend of his sister was henceforth to be a mark, at which the base designs of licentiousness were to be levelled!

All this I heard from himself afterwards, and with the frank ingenuousness of his nature, he described to me the sensations of indignation and sorrow that filled his generous heart.

He was with me early the next day, and forced me to give him a long detail of every circumstance concerning Rosalie.

On the subject of Arturo he was peculiarly curious, and I, with my usual openness, told him the story of his hopeless love; but after I had been thus communicative, I began to think I might just as well have been less candid; for there was a kind of flash of satisfaction, which passed over the countenance of my attentive listener, when I declared my conviction that Rosalie's heart was untouched, which rather disturbed me, and after this dear boy had left me, I felt uncomfortable. I wished we had not met him in the park, thus prematurely introducing that fascinating Rosalie to a youth so full of the ardour of his age. I had hoped to delay all interviews with her, till Lord and Lady Belmont were in London to sanction my proceedings.

It seemed to me that I was accumulating troubles for myself, as well as others, and I was vexed and perplexed. Then I began to think of poor Arturo, who had quitted us in so abrupt and disconsolate a manner. I was uneasy at his non-appearance. Those young people were certainly fated to be the torments of my life! I had not seen Rosalie that morning, for she was particularly engaged at home, with many details all concerning her appearance on the Saturday week following.

I grew very fidgety towards the afternoon, about the poor Italian youth, and at length determined to seek him at his own lodgings. They were in Greek Street, Soho, and thither I directed my steps.

I found that he lived over a music shop, and on reaching it, had to make my way up to the very top of the house, before I arrived at the door of his apartment. I knocked, but received no answer—I knocked again, all was silent. I then thought he must be out, and was turning away, when it occurred to me to try the handle, and at least ascertain if the door were locked. It opened immediately, and I entered the miserably furnished room. In one corner stood a bed, and on casting my eyes towards it, I saw Arturo lying upon it in a deep sleep. I approached. He was dressed, and from the position he had taken, it appeared to me, that he had thrown himself down overcome by fatigue, and in that manner sleep had overtaken him. His countenance was dreadfully pale, and even then exhibited symptoms of grief. I glanced round the apartment; every thing about it looked desolate and miserable, save the flowers, which it was his delight to collect, for the purpose of being able to send a bouquet occasionally to Rosalie, and upon which, I have heard, he spent almost every shilling he possessed. I recognized a bird that had formerly belonged to Rosalie, but which she was not allowed to bring from Naples. Arturo had begged to have it, and carefully had he treasured it.

I felt very sad as I cast my eyes around, and thought of the many melancholy hours the poor devoted youth must spend in loneliness and sorrow. I seated myself by the side of his bed, determining there to watch for the moment of his

awakening, for I knew that my presence would afford him comfort.

I had not long to wait; after two or three restless movements, with a deep sigh, he opened his large eyes, and fixed them with a kind of bewildered gaze upon my countenance. He evidently, at first, thought my appearance was one of the confused dreams which had been haunting his imagination, but by degrees his senses became more clear, and starting up, he seized my hand, exclaiming, "*Oh caro mio amico, e siete dunque venuto a consolarmi?*"*

Poor fellow! I soon discovered what I had feared. The occurrence of the preceding day had almost distracted him, and to my consternation, I found that food had not passed his lips, for more than four-and-twenty hours. There was to be a rehearsal that afternoon, and I feared that he had not strength to make his appearance.

My first step was to procure him some nourishment, and for that purpose, I immediately went down stairs, to make interest with any servant I might find, to bring him some breakfast. This accomplished, I told him I would come to him again, in the course of an hour, which I did, and had the satisfaction of seeing him, in all respects, much better.

I took that opportunity of gently admonishing him upon the subject of his impetuosity. I pointed out to him how much he must have hurt Rosalie's feelings, by leaving her so abruptly, and added that had she seen him cast her bouquet so unkindly on the ground, she would have been indeed distressed—and, in the present nervous state of her spirits, those who loved her ought to strive to save her from all unnecessary agitation.

I then proceeded to enforce upon him, that Lord Henry was the friend of her childhood; she had grown up with him as a sister, and with a sister's degree of affection she regarded him. I endeavoured to extract from him a promise that, in future, he would try to govern his ill-placed sensibility. He shook his head doubtfully.

"My friend, my father," he said, with a mournful pathos in his voice, which went to my soul, "if you could only imagine the raging fire which burns in my heart, you would then be able to understand what fuel to the flame was the sight of her whom I so fervently adore, in the arms of another, and she, great God! enduring the caress, and looking upon him with eyes beaming with tenderness, such as she never bestowed on her poor devoted, idolizing slave, Arturo. Shall I ever cease to remember, without torture, the joy which illumined her whole countenance? *Oh signor, caro signor*, through the long and weary night, whilst with disordered steps I paced the narrow precincts of this apartment, that look of hers, and the triumphant happy aspect of the audacious youth who dared thus to press her to his heart, was ever before my imagination; it has assumed the form of a vision which seemed to follow me—to mock at me."

All this was uttered by Arturo, with a tone of voice, a countenance and gesture, that rendered the words most emphatic. I trembled as I listened to him. Fierce, indeed, were the passions which blazed in his nature, and to what might they not lead! Shuddering, I turned my mind from contemplating horrors that suggested themselves to my fancy.

I felt that I had little power to calm his irritated mind, but I endeavoured to sooth him, by those

* Oh my dear friend, are you then come to console me?

only means, which I knew were most likely to soften the intensity of his present feelings.

In a degree I succeeded, and we walked forth together towards the Haymarket, where there was to be a rehearsal, and where we should also meet Rosalie.

People talk of the anxieties—perplexities and responsibilities caused by the possession of a large family. Truly can I enter into their feelings. And I, an old bachelor, who might have passed through life with that degree of negative happiness which belongs to the state, had brought upon my foolish self trammels and troubles, as exciting and painful to my mind, as if I had been the father of a dozen children.

But these young people had so completely identified themselves with my nature—my whole heart and soul were so entirely given up to their cause, that now there was no retreat for me. I must continue the course that I had commenced, and although, certainly, the future looked dark and gloomy, and foreboding fears often caused my heart to sink, still I felt so deeply involved in their interests, and my affections so warmly engrossed in their welfare, that truly was I convinced their destiny was my own fate.

CHAPTER XX.

The Belmont family had arrived in Piccadilly. This I learnt in a little note from dear Lady Gertrude, begging me at the same time to come to her immediately. Most happy was I to obey the summons, and I found her, as usual, all kindness and affection, evincing the pleasure which she really seemed to feel, in welcoming again, her old and devoted friend.

I soon discovered that she had much impatience and curiosity upon the subject of Rosalie, for she had heard from Lord Henry that she was in London, and was full of anxiety to know when she might see her.

I told her that, really, I dared not give her any hope at the present moment. There was so short a time intervening before the period when she was to make her appearance: and in the critical state in which I considered her nervous system, I said that it would be more prudent, and even more kind, not to add to it by any fresh excitement.

Lady Gertrude was grieved and disappointed.—"I do so long to see my darling little Rosalie," she said; "but, by the by, I hear she is no longer to be so named—indeed, Mr. Leslie, my womanly curiosity is excited, and even, if possible, adds to the great desire I have to meet her again. I never heard any thing like the glowing description Henry has given me of her beauty; and you know, that much as we loved Rosalie, we never thought her so very pretty. Her eyes certainly were always splendid! and my brother tells me she is tall—how incomprehensible that appears! My idea of her is the remembrance of a dear little dark fairy, who used, in spite of every thing, to bewitch us all—old and young, by her sweetness, her cleverness, and indescribable fascinations; I feel that she is a different person. I almost regret this very great change, for it now seems that I shall have to make her acquaintance over again—so totally must she be altered."

I reminded Lady Gertrude that if she had only

chosen to believe me, she would long ago have been reconciled to this alteration; but, I added, laughing—"I am sure you all fancy I look upon those I love through a magnifying glass, and that even their size I exaggerate."

"Henry is very angry," she continued, "that you will not allow him to have another sight of her, and he talks a great deal about a handsome young Italian, who, he says, is in love with Rosalie—now do, pray, tell me all about it, dear, good Mr. Leslie, for you know how interested I am in all that concerns her."

I did so. I gave her a minute detail of poor Arturo's feelings; and warmly—with intense interest, did she enter into the whole of the perplexing affair.

"I wish I was married," exclaimed this charming creature, "then I should feel at liberty to take some decided step with regard to this poor girl; as I am now situated, mamma has scruples upon the subject, and of course I must respect them—but still, something must be done—and indeed, dear mamma is as anxious as I am, that what she now endures, may be ameliorated—but I wish to save her, if possible, from the hands of those dreadful people into whose power she has fallen."

Dear young lady! how my heart responded to all she said! But still I repeated that at this moment nothing could be done, and that I thought the kindest plan was to keep her in ignorance, for the present, of the near vicinity of those she loved so well. However, Lady Gertrude was not thus to be satisfied, and at length it was arranged that Mademoiselle Kramer should go to Rosalie. She might be supposed to have preceded the family to London, and to her Lady Gertrude could intrust the charge of discovering all her little wants—what might, at least, contribute to her personal comfort. With the delicate foresight of her sex, she imagined a thousand little things it would please the poor girl to possess, and with which she could so easily supply her, and then, the wretched mother—to her also she might be of some use.

Sweet, excellent girl! I inwardly prayed that every blessing might be multiplied to her; for her kindness to the unhappy Rosalie was not a mere emotion—a glow kindling and fading in a moment; it was a steady principle, displaying itself in tender assiduity, in real and decided acts of friendship.

Lady Gertrude then told me of a circumstance which afforded me the greatest delight. It was, that every thing was now arranged for the marriage of Fitz-Ernest with Lady Constance. This was, indeed, joyful intelligence, and I had an opportunity, in a few moments, of making my congratulations personally to the bridegroom elect; for having heard that I was with his sister, he hastened, with his usual warmth and affection to meet me.

My felicitations upon the subject of his marriage were heartfelt and enthusiastic. He seemed gratified by them; but I who had become a regular "Paul Pry" into the feelings of others, imagined—I hoped then it was only fancy—that he looked almost too calm upon the occasion. I could not perceive any of the little confusion—the agitation of the ardent lover, and I began to turn it in my busy brain, that, perhaps, he had been talked into this marriage, and that probably, although he admired the excellence and amiability of the young lady, passionate love was still to come. His feelings at present certainly were not those of great *empressment*.

On asking when the happy event was to take place, I found it was not to be for some months,

owing to Lady Constance being still in deep mourning for her mother.

Lord Fitz-Ernest soon changed the subject, and began to ask question after question about Rosalie. When could he see her? was his anxious exclamation, for it appeared as if Lord Henry's vivid description of her charms had excited the curiosity of all the family.

I again entreated that at present she might not be disturbed by any thing that would agitate her so much as seeing her friends; and even on the day she was to appear, it would be kindness in them not to be there; but to that, Lord Fitz-Ernest would not listen.

It made me quite fidgetty to see the degree of anxiety he evinced to meet my beautiful protegee; and, foolish old man that I was, I began to feel quite jealous for Lady Constance, so that my manner became perplexed and confused; Fitz-Ernest perceiving this, laughed at and bantered me upon the subject; and was so unkind as to say that, notwithstanding my gray hair, he should begin to suspect I had some motive for thus withholding this hidden beauty from other eyes than my own; in short he made me angry and cross, and I went away dissatisfied with myself, and thinking I had never seen my favourite Fitz-Ernest to so little advantage. As I walked home, I believe I was muttering to myself "how these young folks do plague me—my hands are too full—I wish I had nothing to do with them."

But then I thought of poor defenceless Rosalie, and my heart smote me for the idea.

CHAPTER XXI.

My readers may now transport themselves into the habitation of Sir Francis Somerville.

It was in the drawing-room that the breakfast service was laid; and a scene more replete with luxury can scarcely be imagined. The apartment, although not of large dimensions, was lofty—the furniture exquisite. No expense had been spared to collect every article of *virtu*. The choicest pictures graced the walls; and, although the subjects were not altogether those which the chastest mind might have chosen, still, they were beautiful—enchanting to the senses of those epicureans in enjoyment, who frequented the bachelor abode of Sir Francis Somerville.

It was noon; but the baronet was still in his loose brocaded silk dressing-gown—his feet luxuriating in Turkish slippers, and he was half reclining in the most voluptuous of *fauteuils*.

"Bring another cup and saucer, Gustave," he said languidly to the French servant, who was hovering about the room, as if in expectation of receiving some fresh orders from his master. "I expect some one to breakfast; and pray tell Lopreste to send some of those outlets that were so much liked at Melton last winter; and mind he does not forget the sauce, with that slightest *soupsou* of garlic. I must put that fellow Templeton, in good humour," he continued, half aloud to himself, as the servant withdrew, "and the only way to his heart is through his stomach;—but how late the animal is," he added, looking at a *Breguet* clock which stood on the mantel-piece. "I hope he is not going to give me the slip, for I must and will see this new girl at the Opera-house, without delay, before she has been gazed upon by

all London. I also am determined to be introduced to her, and Templeton is the only tool I can, at this moment, use for the purpose. What a state Henry de Vere was in about her! I certainly am an extraordinary fellow!" continued to apostrophize Sir Francis, smiling at his own conceit—

"To one thing constant never."

"I declare, the description of this beauty, added to the desire, which I cannot help feeling, to throw over any one of those pretended saints, the Belmonts, has inspired me with such an ardent wish to be the first to enjoy the smiles of this new divinity, that there is nothing I would not give to realize it. Oh! woman! woman! what mischievous little devils you all are!"

A sharp, loud knock put an end to this soliloquy, and another moment, the door was opened, and in walked Augustus Templeton, Esq., followed by some servants, bearing several covers, amongst which was a most fragrant dish of cutlets, with other delicacies of this elaborate and *recherche* breakfast. The very sight and smell of these dainties seemed to rejoice the inmost soul of Templeton.

"Upon my word," he said, rubbing his hands, "You're a very good fellow, Somerville, to recollect my favourite dish; what a breakfast I shall make! for this long walk across the Park has made me just as hungry as if I had had a run with the Quorn hounds in Leicestershire!"

Then down he sat, and, as Sir Francis beheld with impatience the manner in which he partook of every thing that was before him, he plainly perceived, that until his hunger was appeased, there was little use in asking him any questions. Nothing could turn his eyes from his plate, and his mouth was always much too full to enable him to articulate. At last, the eager baronet saw what he hoped was the last mouthful, swallowed by his voracious friend, and then he could not help saying—"Really, Templeton, I am glad that you have enjoyed your breakfast; but, upon my word, if you go on in this way, you will assuredly die of apoplexy before a year is out—what with that short neck and red face of yours!"

"Very flattering certainly!" replied the other, starting up, and placing himself before the glass, whilst he endeavoured to stretch his throat out to its utmost dimensions; "and as for a red face, my colour, I flatter myself, is the hue of health. I can tell you, I should be confoundedly sorry to look as thin and lantern-jawed as you do, Somerville, although I believe you fancy your sallow looks are extremely interesting."

"I sometimes imagine they are considered so," rejoined Sir Francis; and the calm tone of self-satisfaction with which he pronounced these words, proved that, indeed, he thought so.

"But, Templeton, *mon beau garçon*," he continued; "never mind looks. Our beauty," he added, in a conciliatory tone, "is of a different style; but, of course, my good fellow, I do not mean to say that yours may not be infinitely preferred in certain quarters; indeed, I am convinced your little fat Fanny would not have looked at me, after she had once cast her eyes upon that beau-ideal of beauty—a beauty she might have before *dreamt* of, but never seen realized, until she beheld the too attractive Augustus!"

Templeton looked delighted.

"Come, come, my dear boy; this is rather too strong," he exclaimed; "I dare say you are only quizzing." But still he kept his eyes on the glass,

and employed himself in arranging his cinnamon-coloured locks—brushing up, so as to make the most of his whiskers—altering the set of his neck-cloth—in short, *making himself up*, as much as possible, to represent the fine fellow he inwardly believed himself to be.

Sir Francis saw, reflected in the mirror, the pleased countenance of the silly dandy, and thought this was the moment to strike, for the iron appeared extremely hot.

"By the by, Templeton, you said last night, that you were going to the rehearsal at the Opera-house this morning. I want you to take me with you."

"Quite impossible! it is with the utmost difficulty I can get in myself—and really, you must excuse me, Somerville," he added, very pompously; "it would entirely put me out—derange all my plans confoundedly."

"Nonsense! now, just listen to me, Templeton, and don't be a fool. I not only intend that you shall take me there this very morning, but I also insist upon your introducing me to the Signora Myrtila, for I am quite determined to make the acquaintance of this *cantatrice*. Now, hold your tongue, and save yourself the trouble of speaking," (seeing that his companion was about to interrupt him,) "you know very well, you find your *devoirs* to the little Fanny sufficiently expensive, and you may be certain, that, to get on with this Signora, you would have to pay through the nose, which, I am quite aware, you cannot do; therefore, without any farther hesitation, you must just go with me to the Haymarket, and, as we pass Storr & Mortimer's, you shall, as a reward, choose any thing you please—in moderation, remember—for your nimble toed goddess, and, of course, I will pay for it; and, depend upon it, that will be much wiser than trying to make a fool of yourself in a quarter where you cannot have the remotest chance of success. My dear fellow, recollect the old adage—'You must creep before you can climb.' You have begun, prudently, at the very lowest step, and it will be some time before you can expect to reach to such a height as the *Prima Donna* of the Italian Opera."

Templeton looked irresolute. He scarcely knew whether he had better not play the part of the offended man; however, his eyes fell on the breakfast-table. The remembrance of all the past *feeds*, of which he had so often partaken, and the visions of future ones, checked the current of his anger; the long purse of his friend, also, which had often been of such essential service to him, flashed upon his recollection.

He therefore only said:—"Upon my honour, you are too hard—too *exigeant*; and nothing would tempt me to accede to your very preposterous wish, were it not for the spite I feel towards that young de Vere. I think his impertinence to me was beyond any thing I ever met with; the idea of making such a fuss, and standing up in such a manner, for the reputation of a girl, who is the daughter of such a profligate as Gabrielli, and whose companion, Myrtila, every one knows to be as bad as she can be; it is really quite absurd, perfectly ludicrous; if he were not such a boy," continued the bullying Irishman, looking very fierce, "I should have been tempted to chastise him for his insolence."

"Oh," said Sir Francis, laughing, "pray do not trouble yourself; for, perhaps, after all, you would come off second best; and I cannot spare you at present, *mon cher*—you are the most useful friend I possess."

"Well, well," rejoined Templeton, with much importance of manner; "then pray go and dress, for if I am to take you to this place, it is very near the time we ought to be there, and my friend promised to be on the look-out for me. But I say, Somerville, you must pay him also—remember that."

"Very well, I am prepared," replied the baronet, as he left the room to adonize, leaving his guest to amuse himself with the looking-glass and the *debris* of the breakfast, upon which he would fain have made another attack, as there was still a outlet remaining, which looked very inviting, but the officious servants entered at that moment, and every vestige of the repast was soon removed.

Sir Francis was not very long in making his appearance, and they immediately sallied forth. Templeton took care that the visit to Storr & Mortimer's should not be forgotten; and, not only did he choose a present for Fanny, but some smart pins and a set of flaming studs for himself; a ring of large dimensions also struck his fancy, but Sir Francis dragged him away.

"Upon my word," he said, "I think you have done very well for one morning; the ring must wait for some other time, when you have earned it by fresh deeds done in my service."

With hasty steps, they now proceeded to the Haymarket, and without much difficulty, the two young men found themselves seated in a box, concealed as much as possible by the curtain.

The rehearsal had not yet commenced, and they sat, for some time, in the dark and dingy theatre, impatiently waiting for the drawing up of the curtain. Somerville was silent and abstracted, and his companion, who was, perhaps, a little oppressed by the breakfast he had just eaten, was more than usually inclined to be taciturn. At last, however, being of a peculiar curious disposition, he was roused by the noise of a box-door opening on the opposite side, into which some one entered, but that was all he could discover at the moment; for, whoever it might be, seemed, in his turn, also desirous of remaining incognito, as the curtains were immediately drawn, and the new comer was quite invisible.

"I say, Somerville, I wonder who that is, who has seated himself in the box opposite? I dare say, with the view of poaching upon the manor which we wish to keep for ourselves;" but no answer did Templeton obtain; for at that instant, the rehearsal commenced, and Sir Francis had neither eyes nor ears, but for the performance.

It was, indeed, with almost breathless anxiety that he waited for the appearance of the *cantatrice*. Arturo was the first of the new singers who presented himself.

"That's the fellow I told you about," exclaimed Templeton; "is he not disgustingly handsome?"

"He is, indeed," replied Sir Francis, "his cast of countenance is splendid; and what a voice! But is that the prima donna?" he exclaimed, taking hold of Templeton's arm with a gripe which made him shrink, and must have left, at least, the impression of his five fingers upon his flesh.

"To be sure it is; but pray do not hurt me so horribly, and do not speak so loud."

He need not thus have enjoined silence, for Rosalie then commenced singing, and Sir Francis, really quite pale from the sudden surprise, beheld before him the beautiful being who had so long troubled his fancy, for whom he had so assiduously sought—but in vain. Silent he now sat—motionless—entranced; his delighted senses revelled in ecstasy. The melodious strains which proceeded

from such lips! he had never heard any thing so exquisite—and oh! how lovely did he consider her! His eyes were fascinated to the one object, and fruitless now were all Templeton's endeavours to edge in a remark. Whenever he opened his lips, Sir Francis, with a glance of impatient anger, desired him to be silent, and after it was all over, he still remained for some moments fixed to the spot; suddenly he started up, and giving the astounded Templeton a most friendly although, at the same time, electrifying clap upon the back, exclaimed:—"Now, old boy, if you do not contrive, in the course of four-and-twenty hours, to gain for me an introduction to that angelic creature, you will hear that I have blown out my brains, and you will lose your best friend; for, remember, if you do what I wish, there is nothing you may not command in return."

The two virtuous friends were now in the street, but they were still hovering near the doors of the theatre, whence the performers had not yet issued. Presently Rosalie appeared, leaning on my arm, but her thick veil was closely drawn over her face and a large mantle perfectly enveloped her form.

"Who is that old quizz, I wonder, who always seems to attend her?" exclaimed Sir Francis.

They had not time to make any farther remark while we remained, for as Rosalie was very much fatigued, I soon put her into a coach, and we drove off. But when Gabrielli, with Myrtilla leaning on his arm, advanced, they were immediately accosted by Templeton, who had known them formerly in Italy, and then followed the introduction to Sir Francis.

This was the first step gained towards the completion of the base project, now the engrossing idea of the vitiated mind of Sir Francis. How little did he contemplate the perfect subversion of his plans; how little did he then anticipate the dominion which purity and high principle would exercise over the licentious feelings of his heart!

CHAPTER XXII.

It is again in Lady Gertrude's morning-room, that I am about to assemble some of the *dramatis personae* of my story.

Lady Constance had been passing the whole day with her future sister. It was a pretty sight, the interior of this chamber, and as I looked round upon all the lovely young creatures, who were so gracefully pursuing their various occupations, I began to compare the scene with classic associations. Was it not like unto the Temple of the Muses?

At a window, sat one of the beautiful sisters, busily employed in drawing. Lady Constance had just risen from the harp, and was still leaning silently against it. Methought, as my eye fell upon her, that her countenance was clouded; certainly a pensive cast overshadowed it, and I turned it instinctively to Fitz-Ernest, who was also in the room; but he appeared deeply engrossed by the book he was reading.

Lady Gertrude was at her embroidery-frame and as I admired the beauty of the design she was tracing, she smiled and blushed, and half whispered, that it was for a waistcoat for Alandale.

I had scarcely been in the room more than a few minutes when the party was increased by the entrance of Lord Henry, whom I had not seen!

some days. Almost immediately that he saw me, he exclaimed: "Mr. Leslie, how is Rosalie?"

At the magic sound of this name, all eyes were directed towards me, and I perceived that Fitz-Ernest directly threw his book upon the table, and fixed a look upon my countenance, which conveyed the expression of intense interest, but he still remained silent.

Lord Henry continued the theme, by saying:—"I have been at your lodgings fifty times, at least, and I never find you at home. Is it not hard," addressing his sister Gertrude, "that Mr. Leslie will not let us see that beautiful Rosalie; it is dreadfully tantalizing, just to have one glimpse of her, and no more. Fitz-Ernest," he added, seeming to wish to prolong the subject which appeared the one that engrossed his imagination, "as I have before told you, there never was any thing so lovely as Rosalie—much too handsome. I have been wretched ever since I saw her; she is so infinitely too good for her situation in life, and she seems to feel it so acutely! Mr. Leslie," he continued, turning towards me with quickness, "I trust, indeed, that you watch over her, and never leave her; for it distracts me, when I think to what she will be exposed."

"It is truly a hard case, a crying shame," exclaimed Fitz-Ernest, with strong emotion; "and it is absurd, Mr. Leslie, your wishing to prevent our interfering at this moment; my presence had always the effect of frightening Gabrielli into good behaviour. I shall go instantly to my mother and consult with her upon the subject;" and thus saying, he quitted the room abruptly, leaving a disagreeable feeling in one heart, certainly; for on looking at Lady Constance, I saw that she had turned very pale.

A silence of some minutes ensued, and then the conversation again reverted to Rosalie. With much concern, I perceived that Lady Constance continued to seem uncomfortable. Her eyes wandered towards the door, hoping, no doubt, to see Fitz-Ernest re-enter, but he came not.

"Dear Gertrude," she at length said, in a tone of voice, which told of nervousness, "I must return home. It is one o'clock, and I promised papa to call for him at Kensington at three. I can walk, if you will allow a servant to accompany me."

"But, Constance," replied Gertrude, "I thought you had ordered the carriage to come for you here? You must go down to luncheon, which has just been announced;—but," she continued, rising and approaching her, "you look pale, dearest. What is the matter, darling sister?" for she now perceived tears falling fast, from the soft eyes of her charming friend—tears which Constance was vainly endeavouring to repress and conceal;—but the tender words and caresses of Lady Gertrude, seemed completely to have the effect of opening some hitherto obstructed flow of emotion, for leaning on the bosom of this affectionate girl, she wept bitterly.

How I hate to be the witness of tears, whether they proceed from man or woman—young or old—the beautiful or the ill-favoured!

At this moment the sight of them was most peculiarly disagreeable to me;—they appeared doubly painful—wholly unnatural. The fair being, from whose eyes the pearly drops chased each other in such quick succession, seemed so little formed for sorrow. The favoured child of fortune! and yet with every seeming joy brightening around her—the lovely heiress to wealth and rank, still, in heart-felt sorrow she wept.

When the heart is pained by that shaft, which

always wounds the most deeply—*doubt* of the love of one, upon whom we have leant, with the whole weight of affection—where shall it, at that sad moment, turn for relief? Will it find comfort in the recollection of honours and titles, or in the contemplation of surrounding treasures?

Talk not of the honours of a court. Talk not of the wealth of the East. These, in the hour of the soul's bitterness, are indeed spurned as nothing. Every earthly joy, in comparison with the treasure of true affection, is no more than an empty pageant—a feeble reed, which affords no support—a house of straw, that is scattered before the wind!

Lady Gertrude, full of concern for her sweet friend, led her gently from the apartment. "Constance is not well," she said; "I remarked that she has looked ill all the morning."

We will not now follow them into the sacred privacy of the dressing-room. We will leave them to pour forth, to each other, their confessions and their consolations, and revert to one, who had caused this tragic scene, and who had left it so abruptly.

I have hitherto represented Fitz-Ernest to my readers as my favourite young friend. I have said that as a youth, he was of a more serious and reflecting character than his lively brother, and certainly, although, at this moment, I was a little angry, I still must ever have declared, that a more noble, generous heart, never beat in a human frame. But still, where did we ever meet with perfection in this world of sin?

Fitz-Ernest was after all but human, and human passions throbbed as warmly in his bosom, as in those of persons who were perhaps more demonstrative in their feelings. His mind was softened and improved by education, and a strong sense of religion had deeply rooted itself in his nature. That his engagement with Lady Constance was, at first, the result of a desire to fulfil the earnest wishes of his family my readers may have imagined; but he did not offer her his hand until his affections had been gained by his farther knowledge of her perfections. He always admired her as a delightful girl—as a sweet engaging creature, still love *had* formed no part of his thoughts; but after being intimately acquainted with her for some time, one by one her excellencies dawned upon his imagination, and soon he felt convinced, he could love her as a wife, and that, in gaining her affections, he had met with a companion, whose presence would gild and adorn every future year of his life.

This was all as it should be; and if untoward circumstances had not unfortunately occurred, to alter for a space, the current of this feeling, which, though perhaps, of a calm nature, would have strengthened and increased ten-fold, when time, and a still nearer acquaintance with Lady Constance had revealed the real lustre of the treasure which now modestly veiled its own brightness, there might have been no check to the happiness of this amiable girl.

"But the course of true love never did run smooth;" so it is said and sung—and certainly at this moment, Lady Constance felt, with anguish at her heart, that Fitz-Ernest, whom she loved with all the devoted warmth of woman's nature, was altered in his manner—colder—unlike what he was when she existed with him in the world, "to her of ecstasy" in the lovely shades of Belmont.

With the quick and true perception of a loving woman, she instantly detected the abstracted look—the eye more frequently averted, than fixed upon her countenance. This morning particularly,

she had marked a difference that agonized her. Fitz-Ernest was so grave—so silent. Her performance on the harp, which was really beautiful, and had hitherto elicited such praise, now seemed almost unheeded; or the first exclamation of applause which escaped his lips, did not satisfy her exacting heart. In vain his favourite airs were played—the song he so much loved—sung—with oh! what feeling! by her to whom he was betrothed; he appeared only to become more melancholy.

We often assist in the creation of our own miseries, and unhappily for the peace of mind of Lady Constance, she had formed one in her own imagination;—this was no other than a shrinking dread—a trembling jealousy of the attractions she heard ascribed to poor Rosalie.

Oh! how I wish I could with truth declare, that she was unjust towards her affianced lord—that there was not a shadow of foundation for such an idea; but as the historian of this tale, I must be true—I must relate all without reserve or partiality, although even now my heart aches and revolts against saying a word, which will bring to light the only weakness that ever appeared in the character of my dear, and favourite young friend.

The truth is, Fitz-Ernest's curiosity had been much excited by his brother Henry's account of Rosalie, and the interest he had always felt in her welfare—the love that still warmly glowed in his kind heart towards the little pet and play-fellow of his childhood—all combined to render him most anxious to see her.

I wished to do every thing for the best, but in my zeal to do good I blundered sadly. I ought not to have cast such a veil of mystery and romance over the poor girl, which is always inflaming and exciting to the mind of the young. I ought at once to have invested Fitz-Ernest with the character he would have been delighted to assume—that of her friend and patron—her protector. I acted, heaven knows! with the best of motives, but the results were not such as I had hoped.

Fitz-Ernest perceiving that I was determined to postpone the time of his meeting with Rosalie, half out of playful opposition, and urged by a strong feeling of curiosity—resolved to gain his point and see her without my assistance. For this purpose he thought no opportunity would be more favourable than that of gaining admittance to a rehearsal, and forthwith made his way into the Opera House on the same morning, and in the very same manner, in which Sir Francis Somerville and Templeton, found access to the theatre.

When he first seated himself in the box, which commanded an excellent view of the stage, the uppermost feeling that excited him, was a degree of malicious pleasure at having obtained a victory over me, and he laughed to himself when he thought how completely I had been overreached. Then succeeded the anxiety of expectation and curiosity. He longed to see the little Rosalie appear in her new character. He did not entertain the slightest doubt of the exaggeration of my description of her beauty. I was always accused of making gods and goddesses of those I loved—Venuses!—Adonises!

"And Henry," thought Fitz-Ernest, "he is just at the age to think every woman lovely, who is not absolutely the contrary."

It was, therefore, in the true spirit of criticism, and with the determination to be amused, and to be enabled to have a good laugh at my expense, that he awaited the performance which was about to commence. Arturo, as I have before stated,

was the first to make his appearance, and upon this subject Fitz-Ernest could not but allow, that I had not said too much. His heart keenly alive to the fascination of music, became softened—every feeling affected by the powerful influence of the melody, the cadence of which was of so touching a nature;—his rapt senses were now absorbed in listening attention;—for a moment, every thing else was forgotten; so completely was his mind engrossed by the young actor, who now stood before him.

But how can I describe the extraordinary burst of surprise—the shock of amazement I may say, for thus with his own lips he afterward described it to me, when the heroine of the piece at length appeared before his incredulous eyes. He was so astonished—so bewildered—that he felt for a moment, as if the beatings of his heart were suspended.

There had been a vision of loveliness, which for some time floated before his imagination. It was, however, one on which he had not dwelt. Lady Constance even, on that point, might have been satisfied; but it had often rather pertinaciously suggested itself to his memory, like the remembrance of some striking picture, some beautiful landscape, once seen and never to be forgotten. It was strange, for he had ceased to think upon it. His daily increasing affection for Lady Constance had filled his mind with her mild and attractive image, and a life of tranquil happiness with her, bounded his views for the future. Still—and he thought it a strange coincidence—in his dreams sometimes, he saw the countenance of the beautiful girl he had so casually met at Brighton; but on waking, the impression it had left upon his mind, was only imperfect, and he smiled when he recollected the circumstance, and thought upon the eccentric nature of these visitations of sleep.

But how can I express the astonishment he felt in recognizing in the actress who now presented herself to his view, the mysterious beauty who had so interested his every feeling at Brighton; to obtain one more glance from whose eyes of splendour, such as he had never before looked upon—he had so anxiously sought.

He gazed at her fixedly—with intensity. He examined her countenance through his opera glass, and then, like a flash of lightning through his memory, the recollection of Rosalie dawned upon him. It was she indeed, but oh! how changed! how beautiful.

And then she sang! With what thrilling ecstasy did he listen to a voice—unequalled—a voice which, once heard, must ever vibrate on the ear—a melody never to be forgotten!

He listened, and he gazed, till at length—he confessed to me—in the darkness and solitude of his place of concealment, the lovely sight of this sweet girl, at times, was obstructed by tears which would rise ever and anon. "There was something," he said, "so mournfully beautiful about her—the pathos of her notes so touching—so melodiously melancholy!" Genius exemplified itself in every action; and how truly did she feel each word she uttered. Fearfully natural was her acting. As she proceeded in her part, Fitz-Ernest felt his whole frame quivering with agitation; he was deeply affected.

Then did all he had heard from me occur to his memory—her sufferings—the harsh treatment she had endured—the wretches with whom she associated; and with grief he remembered the reverse of this sad picture.

He thought of her, in her past happiness; he

recollected her confiding love towards himself—the time when he was to her as a brother—when she was wont to fly to him for protection, for comfort; and even on his bosom to weep forth her childish sorrows. Poor, poor Rosalie! and his arms could no longer afford her shelter or support!

If we could have penetrated into the recesses of his heart we should have found many a steadfast vow there breathed of devotion to her cause. The affianced husband of Lady Constance, in that moment of excitement, thought only of being the friend, the champion of Rosalie.

Following the impulse of his feelings, fain would he have instantly sought her; but, fortunately, he recollected my words—that agitation to her, at the present moment, would be most injurious, most fatal; and, indeed, when he looked again upon her speaking countenance, there was marked upon it an expression of such indescribable wretchedness—such despairing, hopeless misery, that he was held back. He felt that, truly, this was not the time to come forward, but befriend her he would.

To do my young friend justice, I must add, that it was as a tender, devoted brother that he thought of her; no unworthy idea crossed his imagination. But, alas! alas! how dangerous, how excitable are the fascinations of the gentler sex over the susceptible heart of man!

Fitz-Ernest dreamt not of sinning against his promised bride, when he gazed with such tender admiration upon poor Rosalie; but still, how did this interview affect his general conduct? Was he not, during the course of that evening, sad and silent—*distracted*? All around him appeared common-place. The routine of life he beheld in his family, so replete with luxury, with comfort; all upon whom he cast his eyes tasting the full cup of enjoyment, whilst Rosalie—the beautiful—the highly gifted—was struggling with difficulties, with miseries! Every thing seemed to him tame, insipid. His thoughts were fixed, with too much tenacity, on the soul-stirring scene he had that morning witnessed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Fitz-Ernest had expected to see me that evening; but there was a large dinner party at Belmont house; and, as I disliked mixing with strangers, I did not go, and he was disappointed.

We did not meet until the next morning, as I have before mentioned, in his sister's apartment. After the disappearance of Lady Constance, we were all silent and grave. I rose, shortly, to take my departure. As I was slowly descending the staircase, I heard a quick step behind me, and presently a voice, which I knew to be that of Fitz-Ernest, pronounced my name.

"Mr. Leslie," he said, "if you are going to walk I will accompany you."

I could not say no; although my heart yearned to tell him, rather to go to the sweet girl who might be, even then, weeping and in sorrow; but I felt that I had not business to interfere between the lovers.

Silently, we walked for a short time, and then Fitz-Ernest asked me in which direction I was bound. I told him I had intended to return to my rooms but that, if he pleased, I would go any where with him.

"Oh, no!" he answered; "let me go home with you, for I have much to say."

I was living in the Albany, therefore we soon reached my apartments. Immediately on entering, Fitz-Ernest flung himself listlessly upon a sofa and took off his hat. As my eyes fell on his countenance, I remarked that he looked very ill, and pale, and that a harassed expression pervaded his features.

"Mr. Leslie," he exclaimed, "I scarcely closed my eyes the whole of last night. I have been indescribably wretched. You will, no doubt, be much surprised, when I tell you it is the sight of Rosalie that has conjured up all this discomfort."

"The sight of Rosalie!" I exclaimed; "and where may you have seen her?"

"Why, my dear Sir," he continued, "a little spirit of contradiction, mingled with other feelings, prompted me to determine to steal a march upon you, and obtain a sight of your hidden gem. Heaven knows!" he added, with strong emotion, "I have been punished for endeavouring to counteract your views, for upon my word, the idea of that poor girl, in her present miserable condition, has haunted my mind. Gracious powers! how lovely she is! how bewitching! She cannot," he continued, with a warmth of manner, which appeared to kindle more and more, with every word that passed his lips, "she really must not be allowed to persevere in a life of such risk—such imminent peril—to one so beautiful, so highly gifted. It perfectly distracts me, when I think that she, who, as a child, was so good, so innocent; whose early years were spent under the eye of my excellent mother; the companion of my pure sisters, should now, so totally against every dictate of her heart, every inclination of her nature, be placed in a situation where she will be the mark at which every libertine will presume to aim. I cannot bear it," he cried, with great agitation; "since I have seen her all my old associations have revived; I feel as if one of my own sisters was about to be sacrificed; and, at this moment I would stake a great deal—aye a *great* deal," he again repeated, "even my life to protect her!"

I trembled at these words, and as I watched the speaking countenance of Fitz-Ernest, my heart sank, and I inwardly ejaculated—"Unfortunate Rosalie! did I not always foresee misery wherever you were concerned? I knew not how to reply. I sat speechless and truly uncomfortable."

"My dear sir," he continued, speaking rapidly, and with energetic fervour, "my excellent friend, the friend of Rosalie, you must assist me in saving this interesting—this unfortunate girl; and do not deem the scheme I have to suggest wild or visionary. Were I not just now peculiarly situated, I should not hesitate what course to pursue. I declare to you, that in the character of an anxious brother I would take her away, either by fair means, or, if that failed, by any other that would ensure her escape from that monster, Gabrielli. Did I not see his diabolical countenance even on the stage during the rehearsal—his brutal manner towards her when any thing happened to go wrong in the performance. Once I saw him seize her so roughly by the arm, that the blood curdled in my veins; and, oh! I shall never forget the terrified expression of her features. The wretch!—I am certain he hurt her, for she coloured and shuddered. She looked like an affrighted deer with those large, melancholy, gazelle eyes; and when the man loosened his grasp what a dart she took across the stage, towards the young Italian, the new actor, as if she flew to him for protection! It might have appeared like acting to other beholders, but I, at once, saw it was a frightful reality. Gracious heaven! what a history of

suffering I read in that short space of time ! Now, Mr. Leslie, listen to my plan. I have formed it as if it were for one of my sisters—Gertrude—Geraldine, or any of the others. There is money," he said, laying down a well-stored note-case, "and to any amount I would, too gladly, be answerable, so you perform my will. You have access to Rosalie, so, before it is too late, take her away. Go abroad—I will find a place of security for her ; but, in the name of humanity, remove her from the destruction that awaits her here. Leave all the arrangements to me, if you will only consent to accompany her. But why do you shake your head ? Do you really mean to insinuate, that with all your boasted love for this poor girl, you cannot thus far exert yourself ?"

I now spoke. I tried to impress upon his mind the nature of her engagement—the confusion her non-appearance would create—Gabrielli's fierce rage, which would vent itself in revengeful cruelty on the unhappy mother. I recalled to his recollection that Rosalie was under age, and consequently in his power by law ; that he would seek her in every corner of the globe ; and should she again fall into his hands, what then would be her fate ? I tried all my powers of eloquence to persuade him, that, for the present our most prudent plan, with regard to her interest, was to allow matters to take their course ; but I could not convince him, and, with grief I say it, we parted in anger. The boy whom I had loved so long, who had ever, till now, evinced towards me such respectful affection, left me with the averted look of dissatisfaction.

"Good morning, then," he said, most haughtily, his form assuming additional height, as he drew himself up in proud displeasure. "On your own head may all the misery I anticipate, rest. Rosalie—the child of your adoption—she whom you professed to love so well, is on the brink of a precipice, and you will not so much as stretch forth your hand to save her ; scarcely can any one imagine the snares which encompass her. You may live to repent not having taken my advice."

So saying he quitted the room. And in what a state did he leave me. I will confess it, though it may appear unmanly—childish—I leant forward towards the table near which I was sitting, and, burying my face within my hands, wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was Thursday evening. On the following Saturday Rosalie was to make her *debut*. She had long anticipated the event, and the constant preparations for it had brought her mind into a resigned state with regard to the momentous epoch. Having gained the great point of my presence and protection, half the terrors which encompassed the undertaking appeared to have vanished ; and, moreover, there was a kind of morbid indifference about her, evinced in all her actions, when not absolutely on the stage, which seemed to have deadened—to have benumbed, as it were, all her faculties.

When removed from the influence of the eye of Gabrielli, she generally sat in moody silence. Her usual seat was a low stool, by the side of the sofa on which lay her suffering mother ; and there she would remain, for hours, unoccupied. A book, perhaps, was on her knees, but it was observed that she seldom looked into it. Her large distended eyes seemed fixed on vacancy ; but, should Gabrielli suddenly enter the apartment, then would she start up, and fly to some occupation connected with her calling.

I was astounded by her acting ; as I have before remarked, it was fearfully beautiful. Were the scenes she portrayed mournfully pathetic, then she was, indeed, herself—the sad—the heart-broken Rosalie ; her own sorrows were exemplified ; every word appeared to flow at once from the agonized recesses of her heart.

The effect she produced surprised even me ; while they, whose well-practised ears and eyes had seen so many theatrical exhibitions, were affected, were riveted with rapture and astonishment. The sensation it caused me may easily be imagined, but, I own, I scarcely expected to witness tears, even from some of the oldest stagers.

I have seen them, after a rehearsal, go up to Gabrielli, and, with the fervour so energetically expressed by their language, congratulate him on the treasure he possessed—"the star of splendour"—"the rich prize"—and then, how did it sicken me, when I glanced at that triumphant countenance of the villain. He had purchased it at a dear price.—A victim had been immolated at the shrine of his avarice.

But, when it was all over—the curtain dropped, and the illusion vanished—in the automaton figure who stood before me, the inspired actress could scarcely be recognised. It seemed as if she had been wound up for the performance ; as long as it lasted, and the eye of her tyrant was upon her, her energies were all alive ; and oh ! how fearful did she appear in those scenes in which she had to personify, either rage, revenge, or madness !

She was no longer Rosalie—the young—the lovely—the innocent ; but the maniac—the fury ; and, shuddering, I turned from a sight, which, though splendid as to acting, grated on my feelings. Could it be true ?—could it be possible, that a creature like her, so full of soft—of tender affections, could feel, even in imagination, the semblance of the passions she portrayed ? But, when the burst of enthusiasm was extinguished, with it all animation fled ;—she was a passive image.

I used to take her home, and consign her to the care of Johnson, and then she was placed upon her bed, where she lay quietly, but not asleep. She seldom closed her eyes—but she spoke not—moved not.

It was on Thursday, as I said before. Rosalie was seated at her accustomed place, close by her mother's side. She was bending over a book, and her features were almost totally concealed by the masses of dark hair, which hung in ringlets over her face. Myrtilla entered.

"Rosalie !" she said, "you must come with me ; it is Signor Gabrielli's wish that you should go with us, to-night, to a musical party."

Rosalie looked up, and fixed her eyes upon the Signora, with a kind of bewildered stare.

"It is time to prepare, so pray get up and rouse yourself."

"But what is it that I am to do ?" said Rosalie in a distressed and petulant tone of voice ; "the rehearsal is over ; what more is required of me ? I am weary, why may I not go to rest in peace ?"

"Fool, obstinate idiot !" muttered the woman, but she looked at Rosalie, and, at a glance, saw that there was gathering upon her countenance, that nameless, indescribable expression which foretold a state of mind that baffled even her management ; therefore, softening her accents, she said, "Come, *carissima*, you will be so surprised when you see the beautiful dress I have prepared for you."

"I want no dress, save one," replied Rosalie in a low gloomy tone.

"Well, why did you not express your wish, and your taste should have been consulted. In general you appear quite indifferent upon the subject."

Rosalie's only answer was a wild, unnatural laugh, which sounded painfully upon every ear that heard it. Johnson told me, it was with the greatest difficulty that, at length, Myrtille prevailed on her to submit to being dressed. She tried coaxing and kindness, but it was only at last accomplished by the threat of Gabrielli being sent for to enforce his orders.

Poor Johnson described the scene as being very heart-breaking to witness, for Rosalie was so totally unlike herself; the resistance she made was of a character so new—so completely at variance with the usual mild submission and resignation she displayed on every occasion. It plainly indicated that all was not right, that mental disease was increasing.

However Myrtille, by perseverance, and a tact which might have been admired in a better cause, performed her part to perfection; and the victim was decked most beautifully for the sacrifice; lovely indeed I heard she looked, but truly sad, to those who understood the expression of her countenance. And when, on her brilliant toilette being completed, she again sunk on her accustomed seat, again appeared dead to every surrounding object, except the plaintively uttered wants of her suffering mother, to whom she was always most assiduously attentive, there was an opposition between her occupation and appearance, that scarcely needed the fixed wild look of her beautiful eyes, to bring to the alarmed heart the idea of insanity.

CHAPTER XXV.

Taking advantage of the license which belongs to biographers, and who certainly, in many cases, appear to have at their command that very valuable possession, Fortunatus's wishing cap, by that means transporting themselves to every nook and corner, and even penetrating into the inmost recesses of the minds of those whose characters they wish to portray; with this most useful freedom of a privileged narrator, I will again request my readers to fancy themselves in Hill street, at the abode of Sir Francis Somerville.

The drawing-rooms were brilliantly illuminated; luxury and splendour, although on a small scale, were visible in all directions. Every thing was appropriate, the luxurious *fauteuils*, the sofa, which seemed to court repose; the sparkling gems of vertu, both modern and antique, with which the tables were covered; all was in keeping with the magnificent decorations of the apartment. The lights were placed so as to bring out to the greatest advantage the striking merits and beauties of the selection, though they were, for the most part, voluptuous pictures which graced, or, more truly speaking, disgraced the walls, hung with the richest silk; and the large mirrors reflected back images at whose shrine the voluptuary might offer incense, but from which the eye of modesty must turn with outraged feelings.

The master of the house at this moment stood alone, in the midst of all this blaze of luxury, and it must be allowed that he looked formed to enjoy all the vanities of this world, and the blandishments of pleasure. Few, with him, had been the dark and solitary hours of life, which might have recalled him to reflection; he had hitherto met with nothing that could destroy the dangerous illusion,

and he believed he had no other business on earth, but to spread the feast, and call on the harp and the viol to sound. There he stood, the sole possessor of this bright scene of enchantment, a smile of triumph played on his lips, and his eyes looked animated with joyful expectation. And yet, were we to read the thoughts that filled his mind, the images which there presented themselves were those of vice—vice glorying over every principle of virtue.

No doubt or fear ever for a moment suggested to him, that the sound of the harp and viol might some day be changed to the note of woe; that the serpent might come forth from the roses, where it has lain in ambush, and might give, at some unexpected moment, the fatal sting.

To look at Sir Francis Somerville, at the period I now describe, it might be imagined his inward aspirations were couched in those words so beautifully appropriated to a voluptuous infidel, and given with so much poetical spirit in the Wisdom of Solomon.

"Come on, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us fill ourselves with costly wines; and let no flower of the spring pass by us, let us crown ourselves with rose-buds ere they be withered; let none of us go without a part of our voluptuousness; let us leave tokens of our voluptuousness in every place, for this is our portion, and our lot is this."

A knock at the door was heard, and in another instant, in bounced Templeton.

"Well, *mon cher*, I see you are all ready—all prepared for conquest, deuced cleverly got up, you are certainly; and yet I don't know how it is you manage to look so well, for your dress is not very showy. Just cast your eyes upon my waistcoat, is it not handsome? I can tell you, it is new for the occasion, and abominably extravagant too."

"If you will indulge in gold and silver you must expect to pay for it," said Somerville, looking for a moment, with contemptuous disgust, upon the gaudy attire of his friend; "but where is Fanny? I thought she was to come with you."

"Oh! she will be here in a minute; but, by the by, I heard you had ordered the carriage for the Gabriellis, so I just took the liberty of desiring it to be ready half an hour sooner, and to bring her here first. I was sure you would have no objection, and I thought it would be more comfortable for Fanny than a dirty hackney coach, particularly as she is rather in a fuss about her new pink satin dress. But, Somerville, how splendid these rooms look! I have never seen them lighted, since they were newly furnished. Bless me! I often wish I was a woman;—what a fuss men make about the little angels! I should not object to change with many, I know."

Somerville laughed—he thought of Templeton in petticoats.

"By the by, Somerville—whom do you expect to-night?"

"Not another soul, but a few of the Opera people; as it is, Gabrielli made the greatest favour in the world, of bringing the *Rosalie*, and I promised not to invite a stranger of any description, save yourself. Not that I had the slightest wish or intention of doing otherwise. I am determined to give myself every chance with that beautiful creature, whom the more I think of, the more I admire; there is something so very peculiar about her appearance—her style altogether. I really feel quite nervous, whilst in expectation of her arrival; perhaps she may not fancy me. These beauties give themselves the airs of empresses—crowned

queens are not more exacting, more tyrannical and capricious than they generally are."

"I think you need not have much fear upon that subject, and I will give you every assistance in my power, my good friend," exclaimed Templeton, in a most patronising accent, whilst, as usual, he admired and adjusted himself before the glass; "and one thing I promise—I will not interfere in your views, by making myself too agreeable."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Francis, "I had almost forgotten to request you to conduct yourself properly, and not to be so coarsely officious. To let you into a secret, I only asked Fanny, that she might keep you in order, and here she comes to perform her duty," cried Sir Francis, as a loud knock proclaimed an arrival.

Shortly afterwards the door opened, and Miss Fanny entered—the very fac-simile of what one would imagine to have been the goddess of Templeton's idolatry; and certainly, when, after the preliminary ceremonies of introduction were over, and she was finally seated upon one of the Peraian ottomans of this *recherche* apartment, Fanny looked a little out of place. Her appearance did not quite accord with the harmony of refinement which breathed throughout this temple of taste and costly luxury.

She had a well-made, active little figure, although inclined to *embonpoint*; her petticoats, in the true Columbine style, were short for the prevailing fashion, and her white satin shoes were rather dirty; but she had on a very smart dress, with a profusion of showy ornaments, all extremely like the chosen gifts of the gaudy-looking Augustus. Her ample bust was very much exposed, and her light hair was made to fall in quantities of thin wiry ringlets on each side of her rosy cheeks. Taking her altogether, she was certainly pretty, but very vulgar.

Sir Francis, who, with all his sins, was most perfectly high bred, and gentlemanlike in his manners, received her with scrupulous politeness; and the little lady was soon at her ease. She kindly expressed her admiration of all she saw around her.

"Lord! what a beautiful room," she said; "but upon my word, Sir Francis, your pictures are rather fie fie," and she pretended coyly to turn away her head from the figure of a *venus*, which was suspended before her.

I shall not edify my readers with the conversation that ensued. Those who have frequented society, such as I have been describing, may easily imagine its tone; and those, whose better fate it has been, not to mix with such characters as I have just portrayed, will, I should imagine, gladly dispense with any other record of it.

Sir Francis soon became listless and abstracted, smiling occasionally at the sallies of the sprightly Columbine, or as we may now designate her, the *figurante*, for she was exalted, by having received an engagement at the Opera house. Still her words scarcely reached his ears, so preoccupied were they, by listening to the sound of every carriage as it passed the house. Several arrivals took place, but they were not the Gabriellis. Monsieur Lafleur and a few others.

At length, the well-known roll of a peculiarly hung London carriage, was heard dashing up to the door; the prancing impatient horses, driven so dexterously by the scientific London coachman, and then the prolonged knock of his own important footman. Sir Francis rushed towards the door, and stood in breathless agitation. It was thrown open, and Gabrielli entered, leading in Rosalie, followed by Myrtille.

CHAPTER XXVII

Yes, Rosalie the pure minded—the innocent, was thus led without the slightest pang of compunction, into this gilded nest of corruption. She was beautifully dressed. To do Myrtille justice, she had at least shown exquisite taste, in the choice of the apparel with which the poor girl was adorned. She wore a dress of soft white crape most gracefully trimmed, over a rich satin petticoat. Her sole ornament was a bouquet of choice and bright coloured geraniums. Her splendid black hair was arranged with the utmost skill in the classic style, which so well became the Grecian form of her head; but instead of being braided as usual on her forehead, was allowed to fall in long luxuriant ringlets. Her appearance was certainly most striking from the perfect elegance of her bearing, and her excessive loveliness. Her complexion was of a description which lights up to the greatest perfection—that olive hue, which in the morning, when not animated by colour, is perhaps less beautiful, at night is of the richest tint.

As Rosalie entered the drawing-room, her countenance wore a surprised, an affrighted expression. She had previously suffered much from the annoyance and excitement of a circumstance so totally unusual, as having to dress and prepare, for she knew not what, at so late a period of the evening. Her energies had already been exhausted by the labours of the morning, and she was weary, as well as sick at heart. Besides which, she was always suspicious—always upon the look out for some dreaded ordeal, through which she would be obliged to pass—some fresh indignity or contact with people, of whom she felt a shrinking horror.

In her present state of mind, she was but too much inclined to prejudge all those she met; she considered them all *en masse*; and although doubtless there might have been some very worthy persons, even amongst those she met behind the scenes, and in the green room of the Opera, still, to her prejudiced mind, all seemed alike, bold, licentious and depraved.

The dread, the real terror, with which Gabrielli inspired her, made her, at length, passively submit to place herself under the hands of Myrtille, in order that she might be attired for this new occasion of exhibition, the peculiar nature of which Rosalie scarcely gave herself the trouble to inquire; every thing, she supposed, must be equally odious.

After the signora had completed her task, she surveyed what she had done with evident satisfaction.

"Now," she said, "only look at yourself, and if you are not delighted, you must be even more senseless, than I before imagined."

Rosalie lifted her weary eyes to the glass, and, perhaps, she even might have been a little surprised by what she saw reflected there—for it was remarked that she looked again for a moment fixedly at her own lovely self, and then turned away with a deep sigh.

Myrtille then desired her to go down and show herself to her mother, whilst she made her own toilette.

Poor Mrs. Elton, (for so I always called her) told me that she was lying as usual on the sofa, and her eyes were closed. On hearing some one enter, she opened them.

"I believe I had been half asleep," she said, "and when I beheld the lovely object that stood

before me, I could still have imagined my senses were deceived by a dream; for what a vision of beauty I looked upon! I had never before seen Rosalie thus attired. Her dress was of the most becoming description, and displayed to the utmost perfection, the fine form of my beautiful child; and then her countenance, as she stood for one moment, with a sort of conscious sense of her own loveliness, and the effect she thought it would produce on me! Oh, how sweet was the half smile upon her lips, which, however, had more of sadness in it, than pleasure! Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes—oh! Mr. Leslie, cannot you imagine their expression, when she raised them half-smiling to look at me, and then with that sweet virgin air of modesty so peculiar to herself, cast them down? I was wrapt in admiration, and foolish as it may appear to you, I believe, whilst I contemplated this poor girl, the pride and pleasure which swelled in my heart, made me happier for a few short moments than I have been for years; but it did not last long, like all enjoyments derived from outward circumstances, the sunbeam soon passed, and the black cloud overshadowed the fair prospect. I thought of her perilous situation, of the dangers, which on all sides would encompass her, and the remembrance that it was I—wretched, deluded creature who had led her into the snare—who had dragged her from the smooth path that was before her, into the thorny road which leads to destruction. I gazed on her until tears blinded my vision, and then, in all the misery of a broken heart, I turned my head upon my pillow, there to shed the bitter drops of repentance, while Rosalie seated herself to watch over me."

Poor miserable woman! how could I answer her, when I felt too strong the wretched truth of all she said; how could I even bid her take comfort, when I saw so little to be derived from Rosalie's situation? I could only pity her, as I really did, from the bottom of my heart, and tell her that my prayers were constant to the throne of mercy that the poor child might be defended by aid, such as we could not afford her. I besought her also to pray, and tried to enforce upon her mind, that by casting all her cares, her sins, her sorrows upon Him, who alone careth truly for us, she might hope submissively for pardon and peace for herself, and protection for her innocent child.

What else had I to say? I could not reproach the dying woman. Her heart was softened and improved by the trial of deep adversity, and at least there was joy in thinking, that whilst time was stealing on, with a silent and rapid pace, and death would soon claim her as his own, and place her beyond the reach of hope or pardon, her sighs of penitence breathed in secret, and tears, shed unheeded by human eye, would plead for her in the sight of Him whose blessed attributes, are mercy and forgiveness. But this is a sad and long digression from the subject I had commenced. My readers must forgive me if I tell my story in my own old-fashioned style. I find that if I check my thoughts and prevent their flowing in their natural hum-drum manner, I do not get on so well;—my memory fails and I grow confused.

I left Rosalie just introduced into the drawing-room of Sir Francis Somerville. Her feelings, upon that occasion, were very varied. As she entered the hall, the numerous servants, the lights, the air of the establishment altogether, struck her with the recollection of the past. She had seen nothing like it since she left Belmont House, and it came over her like a dream of by-gone days, when all that met her eyes of comfort, elegance and mag-

nificence, was familiar to her. She experienced a kind of relief in witnessing this, and a feeling of security pervaded her mind as she ascended the stairs. Every thing around had a home-like feeling to her, at least, she felt she was about to be ushered into the presence—as in her innocence she imagined—of respectability. This could not be the abode of any of the Italians—the professors, towards whom she had so strong an antipathy.

Still, however, her heart beat with timidity—with shrinking dread, as she proceeded, and found herself about to be presented to the inmates of the mansion. But at the door she was met by Sir Francis, who with a manner that was fascination itself, and which never appeared to such advantage, as when addressing a young and beautiful woman, accosted her, and with the most respectful attention, led her to a seat. When she, at length, took courage to turn her eyes upon him, the impression he made was most favourable; for she saw before her, one of the handsomest men in London, possessing an air that at once proclaimed his aristocratic position in society; and there was that indescribable something, in his appearance, which recalled thoughts connected with the treasured secrets of her heart.

Could there be a slight recollection, on her part, of having seen him before? or might it have been a family likeness between Sir Francis, and his cousins of the Belmont family? His mother was a sister of Lord Belmont, therefore the resemblance might very naturally have existed. However, let the charm be what it may, which attracted Rosalie, true it was she felt soothed, and although her eyes sought the ground with a tenacity that was tantalizing to him, who coveted a glance from those beautiful orbs, still her heart beat with less painful throbbing.

Her answers to his polite questions were scarcely audible; but Sir Francis was for a few moments perfectly satisfied with his position, for he was feasting upon the perfection of her loveliness. Had poor Rosalie detected even with her most perfect innocence, the impassioned gaze that was riveted upon her, the security and comfort she then experienced, must instantly have vanished. Terrified—defenceless—where could she, sweet lamb, have flown for refuge?

But she saw nothing to discompose her; as I have before said, her eyes were fixed on the carpet; when, however, she was obliged to raise them to answer a servant who handed her coffee, she gave a furtive glance around the apartment, in the newly awakened hope—of what! she herself scarcely knew.

Perhaps it partook of the idea, that she might recognise some friendly countenance, amongst the persons who she was aware were in the room. Arturo perchance was there, and then the train of thought induced by the appearance of Sir Francis suggested to her the image of Lord Henry.

But no—as with a searching look, her eye quickly travelled from face to face, she viewed with sickening disgust, only some professional men and women, amongst them, *Mademoiselle Fanny*, the *ci-devant* Fanny Gibbs of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden; and as Rosalie caught a sight of her exposed bust, and bold looking demeanour, she shuddered; her eyes were again about to seek refuge on the ground, when they happened to fall upon the full length pictures of immorality, which, in every direction, presented themselves. The loud vulgar laugh and coarse jest, met her startled ear; she felt, at once, she was in that style of society, she instinctively abhorred. She turned round, and

looked stedfastly into the countenance of Sir Francis, and it was with an expression which said as plainly as words could have conveyed, "Good Heaven! what is all this? where am I—are you too like those I so much fear and dislike, or will you take pity on me and protect me?"

Sir Francis silently watched the workings of this beautiful face; but Rosalie at length spoke, and said in a rapid manner. "Are you the master of this house?"

"Yes, fair one," he replied in the blandest tones, "and believe me when I declare, that not only every thing it contains, but that I, the monarch of all you survey, am at your command, anxious to do your will. Say only the word—every wish you express shall be obeyed."

"Had I the power to command," answered Rosalie most haughtily, "I should order a carriage to take me hence immediately—from those people—from this house," and as she spoke there was a flush on her cheek, and a majesty that seemed to pervade her whole bearing, which daunted even Sir Francis.

"It must be acting," he thought, "but it is the finest and most true to nature I ever beheld."

He answered, "I regret Signora Rosalie, that I have been unfortunate in not selecting the society you like; but I imagined the ladies and gentlemen who are here, might have been amongst your friends—acquaintances at least."

"Friends!" she exclaimed; "however," she added quickly as she saw Fanny approaching from an inner room, "you cannot be quite the same as the others. There is an indescribable something about you, unlike those with whom I have been in the habit of associating lately, so for mercy's sake! spare me, if possible, from insult, from what I feel I must meet with here—alone—without one creature, to whom I can fly for refuge."

"Rely upon me, loveliest of the lovely!" but Rosalie looked displeased.

"Call me Miss Elton. Sir, that is my name."

"Well, then, Miss Elton, hear me; on my knees I could thank you for bestowing on me so honoured a privilege. I will indeed protect you—none of these persons shall annoy you, confide only in me, for here I swear that I am ready to pledge myself for ever your most devoted slave."

Rosalie opened her large eyes and gazed wildly on him. His manner, as well as his words, puzzled her, but after a moment's pause she said more calmly, "Thank you; then, if you please, remain by my side during the time I stay in this house."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The exultation with which Sir Francis heard these flattering words will be readily imagined. His plans were then, indeed, proceeding with a degree of success, which even exceeded the extent of his hopes.

Already he fancied he had found favour in the sight of this beautiful creature; who, he quickly discovered, possessed a mind of no common description. Indeed, he soon became completely puzzled by her; how was it possible, he thought, his own laxity of morals added to the general opinion he entertained of the weakness and frailty of the fair sex, inflaming his reflections, that a girl, who had lived so long under the protection of such a profligate as Gabrielli, could remain untainted in mind? It was quite out of the question.

He did not know that innate modesty and purity

derived from nature, and refined by education, wraps its possessor in its impenetrable folds, and shields her from the taint of contamination, like the thorns which grow about the rose, proving at once its ornament and safeguard.

Still, however, he saw she was totally unlike any one he had met before. Oh, should he then be the first to touch her heart, to warm it with those feelings which might not as yet have been excited; what triumph!

The evening was passing to Rosalie with a degree of enjoyment she could scarcely have imagined possible. Sir Francis's manner towards her was all that respect and attention could convey. He devoted himself solely to her amusement, showing an anxiety to please and gratify her, which could not fail to be flattering to a heart, little accustomed to meet with so much kindness and consideration.

Sir Francis speedily discovered that she could converse upon other topics save those of frivolity and nonsense: indeed, that she was new and strange to the ordinary routine of agreeable nothings, with which he was wont to regale the ears of his fair friends. He found she was awake upon subjects of less trifling import. She could talk of Italy with good taste; she appreciated, and was pleased with many of the specimens of the scientific curiosities with which the room abounded; fain would she have looked at the really beautiful pictures that adorned the apartment, but they were mingled with those, so little calculated for the eye of a modest female, that she shrunk, abashed, from the contemplation.

Sir Francis, perceiving the genuine feeling of discomfort they occasioned her, with a sudden impulse, whispered to one of the footmen, who was attending with refreshments—"Go, this instant, and tell Jennings, that before he announces supper, the picture over the chimney-piece, the one opposite, and that which hangs over the door, must be all taken down;—now see that this is done immediately."

The man stared, but said—"Yes, Sir Francis," however, it appears, the order could not be credited by the pompous butler, who, presently made his *entree* into the drawing-room, and bowing profoundly, begged to speak a word to his master.

"What the devil do you want?" exclaimed the impatient baronet, who was just preparing to lead Rosalie to the piano-forte.

"If you please, Sir Francis, I did not quite understand the order you gave to Thomas."

"Then, you must be confoundedly stupid; so go down, and have it executed;" and he turned from the discomfited *maitre d'hotel*, and again approached Rosalie, all fascination and softness.

She had received a summons from Gabrielli, to attend him at the piano-forte, and although Sir Francis, doing violence to his own wishes, entreated that she would not sing unless she really did not dislike it, she stood too greatly in awe of her tyrant, for a moment to dare to disobey his commands. Gabrielli accompanied her, in a song from the opera in which she was to appear on the following Saturday.

She had been so long accustomed to display her talent, indeed, from her earliest and happiest days, it had been so familiar to her, that it was the cause of no annoyance; perhaps, even, in the present irritable state of her feelings, she would rather sing, than sit alone with her sad thoughts. Through that harmonious medium, she could pour forth her sentiments, her sorrows; many of the words blended with the woes she felt, and, as every note seemed to rise from the very inmost re-

cesses of her heart, when the sufferings of which she sung appeared to be her own tale of sorrow, the effect she produced, may be faintly imagined when she pronounced the words—“*Infelice, per te speme piu non v'e!*”

The thrilling sensation it made upon the sensibility of those who heard it, is scarcely to be credited. Sir Francis stood before the lovely *cantatrice*; his arms folded, like one entranced; his eyes were fixed upon her, and he really looked pale with emotion. The extraordinary animation of her countenance—the thrilling notes of her voice, which, although powerful, were of the most plaintive expression—almost told her own unhappy story.

True it is, the hitherto hardened man of the world felt, at this moment, as he had never felt before. It seemed as if a halo of innocence enveloped the poor girl, which, even he, daring profligate as he was, acknowledged to himself to be sacred. He felt his heart swell with a sensation very unusual to him. Could it be possible, that he looked upon beauty, for the first time, with a softened, a purified heart? for, whilst gazing on the interesting creature before him, he was startled—ashamed. But, so it was; his eyes were filled with tears—eyes which had never, till now, been used but as slaves to his desires—which had only looked on loveliness with the withering blight of vice.

Whilst under the influence of the purest fascination, Sir Francis felt that his plans were falling to the ground. There was an indescribable manner about Rosalie, a genuine air of modesty, which appeared to have protected her, even from licentious thoughts—a dignity in her innocence, which had the power of altering the course of the ideas, even of the profligate Sir Francis; and, if we could have read the thoughts that flew rapidly across his mind, they would have been in some such strain as this:

“I wish I knew more about the girl: at this moment, I would not, for my life, let her perceive my intentions towards her. I can see, at a glance, that she is purity itself; and, now I remember, she was brought up by those strict Belmonts, and I can trace in her some of their sentiments. I don’t doubt but that I have blundered the whole business. Fool! that I was! to bring her here with such a set about her. Her horror of them is unfeigned, and no wonder!—to think of her elegance—her refinement—and look at them!” and his eye, at this instant, fell upon the blowsy, exposed Fanny; he could have gnashed his teeth, with disgust, at his own mismanagement.

“If she once begins to suspect me, it is all over with my hopes. I must, at least, endeavour to keep up with her present opinion, that I am of a superior order to those into whose society the poor little thing has been so unwittingly thrown. She clung to me for protection from them. I must find out more about her. Good Heavens! how lovely she is! and oh! that voice!—By Jove! she will be the mark at which all London will aim;—nothing like her has ever yet been seen!”

Thus soliloquizing, Sir Francis, who had, in a very short time, drank deep draughts of love, and was beginning to work himself up into a state nearly approaching to torture.

Rosalie ended her strain, and he was, in an instant, at her side, and his arm was, with *empressement*, offered to her. Supper being announced, he led her to the dining-room.

The repast was in character with the tone of luxury, which pervaded all the establishment; but, in these days of gastronomic perfection, I will not attempt to describe it. It is easy to imagine, how

recherche would be the banquet, prepared by one of the first French *artistes*, and where the wealth of the owner made every extravagant superfluity attainable.

It was highly enjoyed by most of the assembled guests, upon whom, however, with the exception of Templeton, the very epicurean delicacies of the feast were rather thrown away; for the greatest part, probably, valued eating more from the quantity, than the exquisite quality of the viands.

Notwithstanding, Champagne, and other choice wines flowed most freely and rapidly, under the direction of Templeton, who sat, in great dignity and exultation at the bottom of the table, and was desired to do the honours by Sir Francis, who was too much engaged with Rosalie—tempting her delicate appetite with assiduous care, and overwhelming her with attentions—to regard any of the party.

Templeton was in his glory. There he sat, with his coat thrown back, displaying his gorgeous waistcoat, brooches and studs, his face more red than usual, from the exertions he was making to do the agreeable. He was “redolent of smiles,” as he glanced from side to side, with patronising importance.

On his right sat Fanny; on his left a fat, good-natured looking Signora, and he was feeding them to their heart’s content.

Certainly our friend Templeton was, at this moment, much happier than the lord of the feast, for his was unmixed bliss. Sir Francis had whispered to him, “Do what you like, order as you please, Templeton, only don’t bore me, and keep those d—d people as much out of my way as you can;” and the baronet seated himself at his own board, with Rosalie by his side, and they were as totally apart from the others, as if they had been in a separate room.

They were both absorbed by their conversation, which was held in a low tone of voice. Sir Francis continued to make Rosalie talk, and at once gained her confidence by informing her that he was the nephew of Lady Belmont. The pleasure this information gave her, and the delightful surprise it occasioned was so great, that her reserve immediately gave way. She was in the presence of one who bore so near an affinity to her beloved friends—what comfort!

The chain which held her silent was loosened, and her answers to his numerous questions were given with unrestrained freedom. Soon he learned the short history of her life, the happiness she had enjoyed, and the abject misery of her present condition; her detestation of the profession she was forced, against her will, to embrace.

Sir Francis, however, soon discovered that the protecting eye of the Belmont family still hovered over the poor girl; their hands were still ready to stretch forth to rescue, to relieve her; the identity of the old quiz with the shovel hat was made known to him; and every word she uttered, conveyed to him more thoroughly the conviction, that never before had he fixed his hopes on an object so difficult to be obtained. The more impediments that crowded around this cherished scheme, the more did he feel certain his happiness was completely connected with his success; and, at length, when the party broke up, after he had carefully wrapped Rosalie in her shawl and handed her into her carriage, he returned to the drawing-room, and threw himself upon a sofa. It did not, however, appear that this action was induced by weariness, for his eyes were bright and wide open. He seemed to meditate deeply.

Templeton, who had safely stowed Fanny in a

coach with some of the other guests, returned, expecting to have some snug chat with his friend over the occurrences of the evening, but this gentleman waved him off in a very impatient tone of voice, "I am tired, Templeton, so don't torment me."

"Why surely you are not going to bed at this time of night; it is only half past twelve; your cab is at the door."

"Well then," replied Sir Francis, "you had better get into it, and take yourself off."

"Very well, *mon cher*," said the good-natured puppy, who certainly must have been of the Spaniel breed, so little he minded being kicked; and he was about to depart, when his friend called out, "I say Templeton, you may come to breakfast here to-morrow." With this soothing unction Templeton took advantage of the cab, and left the baronet to his own reflections.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"How weak, how foolish you must think me, dearest Gertrude! said Lady Constance, as seated by her friend on the sofa in the dressing-room, she leant her head upon her shoulder to conceal the tears, which were still trickling down her cheeks; "but, perhaps," she continued, "if you could understand all that was going forward here," and she pressed her hand to her heart, "you would forgive this demonstration of feelings, which spring from the depth of that affection, which fills my heart even to bursting."

Gertrude fondly pressed the fair speaker to her bosom, and then said, "Believe me, dearest, I enter most fully into your every sentiment; I know what it is to love, and I am quite aware how quick sighted, how sensitive it renders its enslaved victim; creating miseries in every look and action of the one beloved, which falls short of the overwhelming tide of warm attachment, which it almost selfishly expects in return for the devotion of one's own devoted heart."

"Then you will agree with me, Gertrude, with your knowledge of my love for your brother, that there was something in Fitz-Ernest's manner this morning, which was very chilling; oh! I shudder when I think of it. An ice-bolt striking upon my heart is the only language, in which I can describe the effect it had upon me; but do you know, dear friend, it is not the first time, the appalling idea has crossed my terrified imagination, that I am not altogether the model your brother had formed for himself, as the *beau idéal* of what he admires in woman; and oh, Gertrude! do not despise me when I confess," and here she rose and advanced towards the mantel-piece, upon which she leant her elbow, and with her hand shaded her face, "when I say, that I am so mean, so little-minded as to feel a sensation, I fear too closely allied to the despicable passion of jealousy. This Rosalie? speak, tell me at once," and she looked round and fixed her eyes upon the countenance of her friend, in the most imploring manner; "be candid with me, but oh! do not keep me in suspense, have you any reason to believe that your brother feels for her more than the common interest you all seem to entertain in so extraordinary a degree towards that unfortunate girl. Unfortunate did I say? at this moment," she added, with the deepest sigh, "I should call her thrice blessed! for I am but too truly convinced, that she occupies the thoughts of Fitz-Ernest, that his heart is so interested in her cause, so kindly open to her distresses, that willingly would I, the

high-born, prosperous, favoured child of fortune, ah! ~~how~~ gladly would I give up all those worldly distinctions, and become poor and destitute, so that I might only be regarded by him with pity, that feeling which is so near akin to the most tender love."

"Poor Rosalie!" exclaimed Gertrude with sadness in her accents, "as Mr. Leslie often says, she seems to have been indeed born to trouble; for not only herself, but others suffer on her account. There is certainly something very extraordinary in the nature of the feeling which draws us towards her—and believe me when I say, I think Fitz-Ernest only participates in it as we have done—he has not seen her for some years. Mr. Leslie strictly forbade our meeting until after she has made her first sacrifice, poor girl! until the dreaded next Saturday is past: therefore he only remembers Rosalie as the little pet of his boyish days, for she was always his special protégée. My other brothers used sometimes to love to torment her, to make her occasionally the subject of their mischievous sport. Fitz-Ernest was ever older than his years, and he never entered into any plan which directed itself in the slightest degree towards hurting the feelings of any living being; far less those of a poor defenceless little girl, who was dependant—at least not quite in the same grade as ourselves. Rosalie at all times sought his protection, defied the other tormenting children, if she could only nestle herself closely by the side of her champion, Fitz-Ernest. It was, of course, with great interest that he watched her daily improvement; and her sweetness, her wild playfulness, certainly endeared her much to my brother, as well as to us all."

Constance still sighed, and looked most sad.—"You cannot wonder," continued Gertrude, "that Fitz-Ernest still feels much solicitude on her account—particularly as he knows she is suffering greatly. Her present position is melancholy to contemplate, for it is one of shrinking distaste to a girl of her very acute sensibility. You cannot imagine how nervous I feel at the idea of Saturday: but I must go and see the darling girl make her debut, although I am sure the sight of Rosalie, pursuing a course from which I know her very soul revolts, will nearly break my heart; but still, by a sort of fascination, I am drawn towards the spot, and go I must. Understanding my own feelings, I can so well account for those of Fitz-Ernest."

"Yes—but—" still persisted Constance, "I hear so much of her excessive beauty that my heart misgives me when I look at myself in this glass, and see reflected an image which possesses so few attractions."

"Oh fie, Constance!" said Gertrude, casting a reproachful glance at her friend, "this is not like yourself. I should almost imagine that you were resorting to a subterfuge, unworthy of the dignity of Constance Delaval—unlike your own candid, straight-forward character; that you were endeavouring to extract an empty compliment."

"No, Gertrude; heaven knows! that is not my aim. If you were to look into my heart, at least, you would find that I was unfeignedly humble, notwithstanding all my other imperfections; but I will allow I am unamiable to-day; you would, however, compassionate me, if you could conceive the sort of shock my heart has sustained; the averted eye, the cold, abstracted manner which this morning tortured my very soul, told a tale that the feelings of Fitz-Ernest were less warmly attached than mine. But do not mistake my sentiments, I am not mean or ungenerous. I feel truly for this poor sweet girl—although, perchance, she may for a time have

driven me from the best and largest place in Fitz-Ernest's memory; but oh! how gladly would I show to him that I am as ready as he is, to stretch forth my hands to her succour—to her assistance, to bestow upon her a sister's kindness; any sacrifice would I make to befriend her—save one," and here again she sighed mournfully. "I cannot allow her any portion of the *heart* of Fitz-Ernest; unless I possess it solely, existence will cease to be a blessing to me."

"Dearest Constance," exclaimed Gertrude, as she drew towards her, and warmly embraced the fair girl. "You speak sweetly, but sadly, much more so than the occasion calls forth. I am not a very able adviser on such a subject, but I should say—with my knowledge of Fitz-Ernest, that I think it would delight him, if you were to express these kind feelings towards Rosalie—if you would, as it were, go hand and hand with him in this work of charity, and take part in the discussions we so constantly have upon the subject. I certainly will now confess that the idea has sometimes struck me, that you, who are generally so alive to every thing which we regard with interest, have been more silent and less ardent upon this, our favourite and most anxious theme. Oh Constance," exclaimed Gertrude, turning very red, as a thought appeared to flash across her mind, "I could almost scold you—thus to misconstrue Fitz-Ernest. Do you not know that we are rather a proud race? and will not that conviction be sufficient to assure you on one point? Do you think, for a moment, that Fitz-Ernest, my brother, would ever forget who he is? what is his destiny? The heir of an illustrious family, which it is his prerogative by birth-right to sustain!"

Whilst thus speaking, the high-born girl looked indeed as if all the pride of ancestry was hovering round her.

"Well, so be it," cried Constance meekly, "heaven grant, indeed, that I am making miseries for myself, and that these dreadful thoughts are but fabrics of my too susceptible brain." And casting her dove-like eyes to heaven, as if for support, she continued, "But oh; what agony to love as I do, and to feel even for an instant the dread of unrequited affection;—it is torture too great to be imagined, save by the unfortunate wretch who has endured it."

The conversation was here interrupted. A servant knocked at the door, to say that the carriage was waiting for Lady Constance, and the two friends, with much tenderness parted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Fitz-Ernest left me, after our warm discussion, I was for a time, I may say, overcome, almost to weakness. My love for the young Belmonts was so great, and certainly the feeling I entertained for Fitz-Ernest, so far stronger than every other, that it was a mixture of disappointment, vexation and sorrow, which struggled in my breast.

Fitz-Ernest had ever appeared until this unhappy morning, so far above all others, so noble, so kind. Never before had I seen him give way to any ebullition of unwarrantable temper. I sat for some time in a very dejected mood, and could have exclaimed, from the bitterness of my thoughts,—
"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

And when I recollected all the numerous perfections of my young friend, I sighed to think that I had discovered one human weakness in so mortifying a manner. But it was not very long that sentiments even bordering upon anger, against Fitz-Ernest, could hold their place in my too loving heart. Soon I found myself making excuses for him; my resentment turning into the old channel of my admiration, lost itself in that most overwhelming tide; and I began to argue with myself in some such manner as this—"After all, it is but natural, and certainly noble in the youth; I must not think so seriously of this, his first and only dereliction from the most affectionate respect. I am persuaded his mind is upright, and is it not a beautiful trait thus to see this young man, whom prosperity might well have rendered selfish, anxious to befriend the oppressed. He knows that poor Rosalie is suffering, and the test of true friendship is constancy in the hour of danger, support in the season of distress. These are indeed its important duties—its most sacred claims. Why should I have given a second motive to Fitz-Ernest's intentions? Shame upon my own sinful thoughts! His views were certainly rather visionary, but no doubt they were virtuous." And so I mused until I had fairly shifted the blame upon my own shoulders, accusing myself of unjustly condemning my long cherished favourite.

Just when I had begun to feel a little soothed and calmed, the door slowly opened, and Arturo appeared, looking paler and more dejected than usual. Really, when he stood before me thus, the very picture of woe, I experienced, for the first time, perhaps, something of a feeling of vexation, and almost groaned aloud rather than sighed, when I thought to myself—"Well, am I never to be at rest? Here is another of my self-created cares."

However, poor fellow! it was only for a moment that I felt thus churlish; it would have been impossible to have looked upon his beautiful countenance—so wan—so dejected—and not have been melted. I bade him sit down, and, for a brief space, we were both silent. I saw that he was struggling with some communication which he was desirous to make, but he seemed to lack the energy to speak. "Well, Arturo," I at length said, "how fares it with you?"

"Not well, not well, Signor mio," he answered, in an agitated tone of voice; "I am wretched, as usual."

And, indeed, he looked what he uttered, for never was a being so altered as this poor youth, since the day I first saw his joyous, careless countenance at Naples.

"But what is it, dear Arturo?" I said, "you surely are wrong thus to give way to despondency. Did you not promise me that you would pray for comfort—that you would look above for strengthening aid to support you through a world to you so distasteful—so full of trouble?"

"Yes, Signor," replied the youth, and the deep pathos of his voice, aided by his own musical language, made the words he uttered sound still more eloquent; "truly, I do pray. I do endeavour to look for consolation at the throne of the Almighty, but there, even, I meet with discouragement; for, the Supreme Being, to whom I address myself, is a great, an awful being! his nature is to us unknown; he dwells in the secret places of eternity, and is surrounded by clouds and darkness. We hear his tremendous voice in the thunder! and in every commotion of the elements we behold the irresistible law of his power. To such a being, I, a poor, insignificant worm, can only look with dis-

may. I contemplate him with awful and mysterious reverence, which overpowers my confidence and trust." And, as he spoke, his countenance wore, more than ever, the expression of the most profound despondency.

"Dearest Arturo," I said, as I warmly pressed his hand, which was cold and damp from nervousness; "do not, I beseech you, view, what ought to be so great a solace to you, with such an eye of distrust. Look not upon the Almighty, as surrounded by his sterner attributes, but think of him as a God of the tenderest compassion and pity, and regarding him thus, as a father, as a friend, it will prove a shade and softening to the awful greatness of the divinity. It will bring down His goodness to the level of your own conception, and fit it to be the object of your humble hope. When we hear the voice of tenderness conveyed by His own words our hearts must be comforted. Distrust and dismay no longer stand before us. We can draw near Him as our Father in Heaven, before whom we may, in humble confidence, pour forth our every sorrow; and his compassion, depend upon it, my dear young friend, imparts a kind regard to the circumstances of the unhappy; and extends itself to our moral and spiritual concerns, in a like manner to our natural and external distresses."

"But it is not for myself I wish to supplicate the mercy of heaven, dear Signor; you know it is for *her* that I would weary heaven with my prayers."

"Arturo," I answered, and I looked reproachfully at the ardent boy; "your own soul is your first concern, and, remember, you are committing a sin in thus creating for yourself an idol, which you set above every other consideration—even your own eternal salvation. My dear young friend," I continued, with much gravity, "by disquieting yourself so much upon the subject of Rosalie, you are encumbering yourself with a load which is not yours to bear, nor have you strength to support it; and, perhaps, the miseries you foresee may never be suffered to arrive. The hand of mercy may either turn into a different course the black cloud that appears to carry the storm, or, even should it burst over the devoted head, the same compassionate hand may allow it to bring under its dark wing some secret consolation; be assured, the great rule both of religion and wisdom is to do our duty, and leave the issue to heaven; waiting, with submission, for what Providence shall see fit to appoint."

"But, Signor," vehemently exclaimed Arturo, starting from his seat, whilst a flash of colour passing over his pale cheeks, lighted his dark eye with fearful splendour, "would you have me tamely wait, and see destruction bursting upon the head of Rosalie? But you know not what happened last night, or you could not be thus tranquil."

"Tell me what!" I cried, terrified by his words and gestures.

He continued, in a rapid manner—"There is a man—an Italian, who lodges near me; he came into my room this morning; he knows—has seen, how I adore Rosalie; his heart is kind, and he pities me. He told me, and my blood froze in my veins as he spoke, and my very heart ceased its pulsations; he told me that demon, Gabrielli, who would sell, without a moment's hesitation, his own soul for gold, had taken Rosalie last night to the house of a profligate young nobleman, who is desperately enamoured of her beauty. He, and the fiend Myrtille, were bribed to do this deed; my informer knows this to be a fact, for he overheard the whole of the negotiation, which occurred after

a rehearsal at the Opera-house. The victim was adorned, and led to the infernal sacrifice, and there her charms were gazed upon by the eye of vice; she was brought into contact with persons whose characters are tainted. What can be the result of all this?" and, with frantic violence, he continued—"And would you have me wait patiently, and abide the consequence? No! rather than see that virgin purity sullied by communication with those wretches, my hand shall be stretched forth to rescue her—no matter in what manner. I would do any thing to save her, although by the deed I were lost! But now I have come to you in the first instance; you must lose no time in going to her, and then you may ascertain all from her own lips. It distracts me, when I think of what she must have endured. I, who know her so well."

Whilst he was speaking, I had already risen, and was hastily preparing to set out, my impatience now almost equalling that of Arturo.

CHAPTER XXX.

I soon reached the abode of Rosalie, and was ushered into her presence. I expected to find her in a state of depression, and dreaded what I should have to encounter; but, to my great surprise, on my entrance she rose from the piano-forte before which she was seated—not, however, until I had heard a few, clear, cheerful notes; and when she came forward to greet me, a bright smile, such as I now rarely saw, was upon her lips.

And oh! it was a relief to me, for Arturo's communication had agitated me dreadfully, and I came prepared for a scene of distress.

"My child," I exclaimed, somewhat hastily, "I am so glad to find you thus; Arturo has been with me, and from what he told me I was uncomfortable about you."

"What could he have said?" she replied; "I have scarcely seen him for some days past, and nothing new had then occurred."

"But, Rosalie, where were you last night?"

"I was just going to tell you, dear Mr. Leslie; but you need not look so concerned for me; I do not know when I passed so agreeable an evening. I was taken to the house of Sir Francis Somerville. Oh! at first how I disliked and dreaded the idea of it! I was wretched, anticipating I know not what evil, but I was most delightfully surprised, for the evening passed with somewhat of pleasure. First of all, I must tell you that Sir Francis is Lord Belmont's nephew—cousin to my darling friends; this knowledge at once inspired me with ease and tranquillity, for he is, in some respects, like them—polished and gentleman-like—winning in his manners. Oh! such a contrast to those with whom I have lately associated; and he was so kind and attentive to me. It appeared as if he wished to shield me from all the horrid people who surrounded me—would you believe it, dear sir, I almost enjoyed the evening I so much dreaded. But why do you look so grave, I have longed so to see you, to tell you this—but you do not seem to enter into it, how is it? tell me, my kind friend."

"I am always delighted, my dear child," I replied, "to see a smile upon your countenance." I paused, scarcely knowing how to proceed or what to say. It seemed cruel, at that moment, to chase away the transient gleam of cheerfulness, by the dark surmises which it was, perhaps, my duty to present to her mind. I hesitated, for was it wise to suggest to her fears which after all might have

no firmer foundation than the excited imagination of the young Italian? So I led her on to speak more fully of the events of the last evening, and she seemed well pleased to dwell upon them.

She gave me a full account of all she had seen; the beautiful specimens of art, the collection of antiques, of choice engravings, the books that had attracted her notice, and which Sir Francis had promised to lend her—she expatiated upon the elegance of the house, every thing reminding her so strongly of past days.

She then told me how kindly Sir Francis had conversed with her, how attentive he had been, guarding her from all the rest of the company, and assiduously endeavouring to amuse and reassure her. And more she would have said, but we were interrupted by the entrance of Gabrielli, who came in, evidently with a prying air of suspicion. He certainly seemed relieved by seeing the countenance of Rosalie, the expression of which he tolerably well understood. He knew that, at least, she had not been complaining, and an expression of satisfaction crossed his odious features. He almost immediately began to speak of the morrow, the day, so dreaded, of Rosalie's appearance.

It appeared as if for a short time she had forgotten the fearful subject, for the words of the Italian seemed to fall with a startling effect upon her ear; she shuddered and shaded her face with both her hands. Presently she turned towards Gabrielli, and I saw that, even in that short time, her countenance had totally changed its expression, and she said in that quick manner which I always hated to hear, "Signor, after to-morrow I shall be at liberty to see my friends; you have promised this, remember!" and the word *Ricordate* was pronounced in a tone of voice which thrilled through all my veins.

Gabrielli, with a sardonic smile answered—"Your friends, Rosalie, may not wish to hold farther communion with one of your profession, which they seem to regard with such disgust; you had better at once give them up. Why should you so weakly cling to them? There is a much more brilliant and agreeable field open to you, than having to play the humble companion to the haughty, stiff-necked aristocracy of this proud country."

Rosalie's eyes actually flashed fire. She arose, and stood exactly before Gabrielli, and fixing a most piercing look upon him, said in a low distinct tone, "Tell me at once, is it your intention to debar me from seeing my beloved friends. Answer me this question."

The man was evidently quailing beneath her glance, but he replied, "I can see no use in such an intercourse, to a person situated as you are, it will only unsettle your ideas, and unfit you for your profession. What can an actress have in common with the lords and ladies of the land? Recollect, now you belong to me—are my property, and me alone you must obey."

"Cruel! cruel!" exclaimed the poor girl, wringing her hands, and then a burst of tears succeeded. But, in another moment, she had brushed away the pearly drops, and, with a calmness which surprised me, thus spoke—"Signor Gabrielli, I know that I am, in a measure, in your power—but even you are aware that there is a spirit within me, which, when once roused, is fierce and intractable—which will not bend to insult or oppression. I am certainly weaker than when first your cruelty brought my spirit of defiance into action; my energies are well nigh exhausted, but still the fire is not extinguished, the last flash will blaze as brightly if you rouse the flame, and its effects may be equally destructive to your views. I can endure much, if so I will it, but

you are also in my power. I will sing, if it is my pleasure; if not, my voice is mute—silent as the grave; promise that you will allow me liberty of action, and I will do your behest to the utmost of my abilities. I will now solemnly bind myself to you until I am of the age of twenty-one, if I may make my own conditions, but if not, you may abide by the consequences."

Whilst she spoke, there was a kind of majesty—of command, about her, which appeared to daunt even the ruffian, although he bit his lips with impotent rage, and then said, with a voice which trembled with smothered anger, "What folly—what childish impertinence is this? Do you flatter yourself, because this old man is present, that I will endure to be insulted by a wayward girl?"

"Rosalie," I at length interposed, dreading the effect of the agitation, which I saw increasing to a frightful pitch, "for Heaven's sake, calm yourself! to what advantage can all this excitement tend?—Continue, my child, to bow meekly to your fate."

"Mr. Leslie," she answered, "what I am now doing is of vital importance to my future existence—without I succeed, I cannot endure my weary life. Signor Gabrielli," she again said, "listen to me, for the last time. It is my wish to have free access to Lord Belmont's family. If you will, in writing, sign your consent, I will also, in the same manner, pledge myself to be your slave, as far as my musical talents are concerned, until I am twenty-one. Three long years!" she ejaculated, as if thinking aloud, and she sighed bitterly; but then added, with a wild, ringing laugh—"but they will soon be over—oh! how soon! Signor, do you hear me?" she continued, for Gabrielli had walked to a window, where he stood, averting a countenance upon which revenge and hatred were most plainly depicted.

He continued silent, and, during this interval, I tried, in as few words as possible, to dissuade her from making so rash a promise; but she waved me off, impatiently, saying—"Oh! do not—do not prevent me; I know that it is the only course to pursue. Signor Gabrielli, if you do not accede to my proposal, listen to the alternative—I will not sing at all. You may imprison me—starve me—may even strike me, as you have done before, but still I will remain voiceless—senseless! You may drag me to the theatre, but it will be an automaton form—I shall only hurl disgrace upon you; but, accede to my simple proposition—sign what I shall write, and I, in my turn, will prove true and honourable to my engagement. I will do my best—and you know what that is."

Gabrielli was actually livid with rage; but he saw the determination of Rosalie's countenance, therefore, seizing a pen, he said, in a voice of suppressed fury—"Presumptuous girl! what am I to write?"

She dictated, in a clear, distinct tone, a document which she made him sign; and I, also, as a witness, was desired by her to annex my signature. She then sat down, and wrote a solemn pledge for her own services, which was executed in the same manner. The moment this was completed, Gabrielli rushed from the room, with ferocious looks and muttered imprecations; and relieved did I feel, when the slammed door shut him out from our presence, and then this fearful scene closed.

Rosalie sank exhausted and almost fainting upon the sofa, and anxious as I was to unburden my mind of the subject which brought me thither, and which Arturo's fears as well as my own had magnified into one of deep and vital importance, I was

obliged to defer saying any thing which might excite her already overwrought feelings.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The dreaded day of Rosalie's *debut* had now arrived; and it was with much nervousness that I looked forward to its close. As I sat over my solitary meal, my thoughts were entirely engrossed by this one most interesting subject. Poor girl! hers was a really melancholy fate.

To another, the brilliant career that presented itself, might have been viewed under a very different aspect; but she was born with a temperament so totally unfitted to meet the circumstances she was destined to encounter. Her feelings were all so, unfortunately, high-wrought.

But why did I give way to sorrowful murmurs? It would have been better had I endeavoured to calm my apprehensions for her, not by impotent regrets, but by remembering that human affairs are not left to roll on according to mere chance, but, even the humblest, the hand of Providence directs; however, it is but too often that an unaccountable mixture of light and darkness presents itself to us, when we attempt to trace the course of events. The ray of illumination that we had followed for awhile, suddenly forsakes us, and our senses are filled with confusion and disorder.

Perhaps at this moment I was thinking, with a degree of dissatisfaction which I ought not to have encouraged, upon her untoward fate. My human understanding could only discern some broken parts of the divine plan—some few links of that chain, which, by secret connexions, binds together the destinies of man. All had been arranged by the just and tender hand of her Heavenly Father.

If the secrets of Providence were laid open to us short-sighted mortals—if the justice of heaven was, in its every step, made manifest to our view—this present state would no longer answer the purpose of discipline and trial; so we must learn to bear, with patience, whatever is imposed upon us, though, indeed, the reward of our constancy may be far distant. Resignation must seal up our lips; in silence must we drop our tears, and adore, even while we mourn.

It was a bright sunny morning, and its influence, as I walked towards Rosalie's abode, improved my spirits. But I felt very anxious when I knocked at the door. I found her in the sitting-room, and Myrtila was in the act of trying on the dress that she was to wear that evening. I glanced at her countenance, and, at first, was reassured, for it did not appear sad; on the contrary, her eyes were bright; but, when I looked again, there was a deep red spot on either cheek, which proved to me, too truly, that her present state was one of excitement.

She looked very lovely in the flowing robes of white muslin, which accorded so well with her own youth and simplicity. The part she was that night to perform was the short, but affecting one of "Nina." She had chosen this character herself; and, with that degree of pertinacity which accompanied some of her actions, and to which, even Gabrielli was obliged, at times, to submit, she had determined to make her *debut* in no other opera. The fact is, she had seen it acted in Italy, and it had made a deep impression on her fancy. Gabrielli would have preferred her coming forth in some more elaborate part, in which her splendid voice and extraordinary talent might have had greater scope; but Rosalie was obstinate, and he was forced,

in this instance, to give way. And, indeed, how could she have chosen better? Most truly did she identify the affecting character she had to portray! and those who saw her can never forget the impression which she made upon their feelings.

As for me, even now, in the darkness of the night, the vision of the beautiful maniac appears before my imagination. I see the white garments of the distracted Nina, hanging in classic folds of drapery around the graceful form; the long dark hair flowing in loose tresses over her fair bosom. Even the flowers she held in her hand appear fresh and bright.

My readers must make allowances for me; there are periods when these recollections return strongly to my mind, when I feel for a while overwhelmed—unmanned; when human feelings throw their darkened veil over my purer and better thoughts, and, for a moment, only a brief, an agonizing moment, I sinfully forget her far more glorious, transcendent happiness, and remember alone that sweet young girl, who was so good, so beautiful, in all her beauty, her gentle attractions mouldering in the dark cold grave, and I, a useless, miserable old man, left to fill a place on earth which would so much more delightfully have been occupied by one so young, so talented and excellent! But cease, vain heart, to murmur; how is it that I, who have since endured so much, the racking pains of a torturing disease, increased by the feebleness of declining years; I who have had also to bow beneath many a stroke of wayward fortune, I trust with pious resignation, how is it that still the pang of memory is ever equally keen upon this one subject; the wound always fresh and bleeding.

"I cannot but remember such things were,
And were most dear to me,"

and, with the remembrance, my tears gush forth, and I weep as if the grief was but of yesterday. But again I will crave the pardon of my gentle reader, and, with an effort to control my painful emotions, proceed with my sorrowful tale.

A short time after my entrance, Rosalie retired with Myrtila to resume her dress. In a few minutes she returned. She did not make any allusion to the evening, but began at once to show me some books she had received from Sir Francis, asking me to look at them, and to tell her whether I approved of them before she commenced their perusal. She also mentioned that he had called the day before, whilst she was at the theatre, which she said she regretted.

"Rosalie," I exclaimed, and there was a degree of sternness in my tone, for she started and coloured, "you must never admit Sir Francis, or any other such recent acquaintance; my dear child," I continued, "in your profession you cannot be too careful, too circumspect."

"Of that I am fully aware, dear Mr. Leslie," she answered, "and I had only one reason for making this exception in favour of Sir Francis,—his near relationship to Lord Belmont's family."

"But Rosalie," I answered, "I grieve to be obliged to say, that the ties of blood, in this instance, create but little similarity between the cousins. Sir Francis is a young man of notoriously libertine character."

Rosalie looked shocked and amazed; but I thought it my duty to proceed, at once, as I had begun.

"You must not receive any favour from his hands—return his books—his presents, if he presumes to make you any; treat his advances with

the most frigid coldness, and, as you value your fair fame, be firm in refusing to go again to his house; however difficult may be the task for you to achieve, still, I think, by your noble determination, you have convinced Gabrielli that you can be resolute upon those points which you consider of vital importance. You will, my poor child, be exposed to a fiery ordeal, your pure mind cannot comprehend the nature of the snares that will, in every direction, encompass you; it would be folly in me not to be explicit, therefore, Rosalie, you must remember that you have great talents, and much personal beauty; your public position will throw you at once into the midst of temptations of every kind; adulation will be poured into your ear; every eye will be upon you, but ever keep in mind that vice, under the most insinuating aspect, walks abroad in this wicked world. 'Tis your destiny to be an actress; on the stage you must act the part given to you; there you may be the impassioned heroine, whether it be love, revenge or hate, you wish to portray; but when the scene is over, you must return to what you have hitherto been in such society, which, believe me, I have witnessed with admiration and respect—the cold—even the forbidding woman; for virtue has often to borrow some of the sterner attributes to maintain its dignity."

Rosalie sighed very deeply, and I, fearful of agitating her farther, at such a moment, changed the subject to one which I thought would cheer her.

"To-morrow, Rosalie, there will, indeed, be joy for you, I shall take you to Belmont House."

These words, however, did not appear to produce the enlivening effect I hoped they would have done. Her countenance was very dejected, and large tears fell slowly from her eyes.

"Mr. Lealie," she said, "after this night's exhibition—after having seen me once publicly assume the character of an actress, will they welcome me as their former Rosalie? No, it is quite impossible. I can define more clearly the feelings of others than you may imagine; but I will go with you to-morrow; once more will I behold all their loved countenances—feast my weary, longing eyes again upon those I so revere—so love. Perhaps, indeed, it may be for the last time, for God is my judge, that I am not one who would wish to intrude. I shall be explicit with Lady Belmont, she who is truth and kindness itself, will be equally candid with me. She shall set the limits to my future intercourse with the family; and, with all her benevolence and equity, I know she has strict notions, with regard to the claims of rank and station. She shall seal my fate, and to her determination I will bow without repining. If she says, 'Rosalie, we shall never cease to love you and watch over you, but it is not consistent with the dignity of your former companions to associate with an actress, situated as you unfortunately are, living with those whose characters I cannot but condemn;' then will I meekly submit. It will only hasten the breaking of this heart, which already is well nigh broken; and I will take a last farewell of those who, as long as I exist, I must always love, but never—never, will I force myself upon them again."

In vain did I assure her that I had Lady Belmont's sanction for presenting her again to her young friends; she continued to shake her head and look incredulous.

"Well, I shall go and judge for myself," she persisted in saying, and the conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of others.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Many hearts beat high with expectation, in regard to the events of the evening. In Belmont House there was but one feeling, and that was most intense interest and nervous anxiety. As for lady Gertrude, she made herself almost ill, so much had she thought and felt upon the subject.

"Alandale," she said to her affianced lord, as he sat by her side, his eyes fixed admiringly on the fine play of her animated countenance, "you will at last see our poor Rosalie, of whom you have heard so much. Now you must promise me, that you will enlist yourself in her cause, and be as warm a friend—an advocate—to her as I am. I have my views with regard to this poor girl, and you must faithfully declare your readiness to assist me in every proposition that I may make."

Lord Alandale was not tardy in satisfying his lovely betrothed. Any thing—every thing in his power; she had only to command.

"I shall go to the Opera to-night; but I must not be seen," she continued: "it would quite unnerve Rosalie, were she to see us. Are you to be there, Henry?" she said to her brother, who had just entered the room.

"What can possess you to ask me such a question?" the young man replied. "Do you think any power on earth would keep me away?"

"Then recollect, Henry, you must hide yourself; for heaven's sake, do nothing to add to the agitation the poor girl must feel on such an occasion. How she will be able to get through it at all, I can hardly imagine; and Fitz-Ernest, he will be there; I suppose he will accompany Constance?"

"No, he has a box of his own, and I am to go with him."

"But, of course, he will join Constance during the evening, and you will come to us."

"I don't know," returned Lord Henry; but, really, just now, I cannot think of sisters or any body else; so, my dear Gertrude, you must be content with your own property, Alandale; Geraldine will, no doubt, pick up some cavalier; and, as for my mother, of course the marquis will be there, to hear the little siren who used formerly to enchant him, though then her talents and perfections were only in embryo. But, good by, I really cannot stay. I feel that I am not able, for a moment, to be quiet this morning. I am all restlessness and impatience. I must endeavour to get rid of the day as well as I can; so adieu," and with these words he ran off.

It was not only in Belmont House, that curiosity and impatience were running high with regard to Rosalie's appearance; great expectations had been raised in the minds of the public. Gabrielli was a deserved favourite in the musical world, as his base voice was certainly superb; therefore, from his pupil and daughter, as such she was supposed by all to be, much was expected. From every lip you heard the same words, "Shall you be at the Opera to-night?" and it was curious to listen to the only name passing from every individual, whether it were young or old, that of the lord or the commoner.

Not a box was to be had, not a stall disengaged. So much anxiety had not been excited for years, for every one seemed to have heard vivid descriptions of the beauty, as well as of the talent of the new *debutante*, and her extreme youth, rendered

the interest still more intense. *La Rosalie* appeared to be destined to be the goddess of the season, even before her perfections had been seen.

And Sir Francis Somerville—did he calmly await the termination of this day?

Vainly had he endeavoured again to catch even a passing glance of *Rosalie's* countenance. The day after she had been to his house, he rose from his almost sleepless pillow, more than ever enamoured of her beauty, and there was something even beyond her loveliness, that had so completely enthralled his senses.

He saw at once that she was no common character—not merely the beautiful image, to be adored solely for its outward charms—that she had mind to enhance them, and not only one that was cultivated, but of a most peculiar character: and Sir Francis experienced so many mingled feelings when he thought upon her, that he scarcely could define whether disappointment or pleasure pervaded his ideas, in having discovered that she was so superior; that his first views with regard to her appeared completely foiled.

She was, indeed, no easy conquest. Besides, it was but too evident, that notwithstanding her extraordinary position, she was guarded with the watchfulness of Cerberus. The Belmonts, whom he always feared and disliked, were her staunch and watchful friends, and then I—what anathemas did he not shower upon me? for I, with my shovel hat, gray locks, and clerical appearance, threw a degree of respectability over the whole affair, that was indeed a stumbling-block to all his plans and wishes.

Templeton this morning found his friend in a very bad humour, and on accosting him in his usual strain, was thrown back considerably by the petulant replies of his friend and patron.

However, after having recruited his strength and spirits by a copious meal, he ventured to say: "Really, Somerville, I've been thinking that after all, that Signora *Rosalie* is nothing so wonderful. She is certainly the most extraordinary young woman I ever saw, and, upon my honour, she gives herself most cursed airs. I shall never forget the look of horror she cast on all your company last night; and really when poor Fanny approached her, if she had been a wild beast, instead of one of the sweetest girls in London, she could not have looked more terrified. For my part I cannot understand these airs and graces, and I can tell you, she is no great favourite with the Opera people. Bless me! in my opinion, there is no comparison between her and Fanny; and upon my word I cannot help thinking that you are disappointed, for you look so deuced grave this morning, my dear fellow."

Sir Francis did not vouchsafe to interrupt this long speech: but if Templeton had looked at his countenance, he would have made his harangue much shorter, for a dark storm was gathering upon the brow of the baronet, and at length he spoke in a tone and manner so sternly severe that Templeton trembled to his very heart's core.

"Templeton," he said, "I shall never forgive myself, for allowing you to take any part in the events of last night; however, I shall derive one advantage from it; it will teach me a useful lesson, that is, to avoid in future having any thing to do with such a blundering idiot as yourself. You need not think that I shall ever henceforward request your services. To think—and the very idea almost maddens me—that I should, with my eyes wide open, have committed such a deed of folly. To have brought her into the presence of such a herd! Fanny indeed! no wonder that she should shrink

from her, with shivering disgust. I have marred my own views, by having any thing to do with such a fool as yourself. So, in future, Templeton, remember, you may continue to eat my dinners, and for the sake of old companionship, I will remain your friend; but at your peril—presume not to mention the name of that young lady, except with the most profound respect: as for pronouncing it coupled with that of Fanny, if you wish to preserve any terms with me, you must avoid henceforth taking so great a liberty."

Templeton looked very red, frightened and angry, and endeavoured to bluster out a few deprecatory sentences; but Sir Francis interrupted him, and in a cold, calm manner, began to speak upon some trivial subject.

Templeton did not linger in Hill Street as he was wont to do. He was too glad to take his departure; and as he slowly, and with a very crest-fallen appearance paced his steps towards his club, he was musing deeply and with mortified feelings on the extraordinary mood of his patron. He had long been his companion—his catpaw—his butt—but never had he seen him thus; and the discomfited dandy began to think, that Sir Francis was either a little wrong in his head, or that, by some means or another, the reign of his favour with the rich and ever generous baronet was nearly over.

Sir Francis, after the disappearance of Templeton, remained for some time in deep meditation. The longer he pondered on the effect that *Rosalie* had produced upon him, the more he became bewildered by the crowd of new ideas and schemes, which rose in quick succession. With all his vices, taste and refinement were much blended in his associations; and the classic beauty of *Rosalie*, the freshness of her cultivated mind, and great talents, had raised her very far above the level at which he had expected to find her. His views were all hasty and impetuous. "She was not, indeed, born for her present station," he mentally ejaculated, "Superior she is to any woman I have ever before beheld—even to those I meet within the highest grade. She would adorn any station!"

And then he again mused for some short space. After a time, he got up, and was for some moments busied in looking over his collection of books; and selecting some, he rang the bell.

"Order my cab in an hour," he said to the servant who attended. He had determined to call upon *Rosalie*, and be himself the bearer of the books, which he intended to lend her. But this wish, my readers have before heard was frustrated. *Rosalie* was really not at home when he first attempted to visit her. He next endeavoured to find Gabrielli, whose good wishes he was most anxious to conciliate, but he was too much engaged with the various arrangements of his vocation, to be accessible.

Sir Francis was in a most unenviable state of mind, and how truly does this illustrate the fact, that the indulged passions of a man having once obtained an unlimited sway, trample him under their very feet. And who can be happy, let their outward condition be ever so splendid, whose imperious wishes detain them at their call, and whose only enjoyments spring from the consolations of those of the world? No, believe it, no chains bind so hard, no fetters hang so heavy, as those which fasten the corrupted heart to the hopes of this deceitful world.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The hour to me, so fraught with interest, had nearly arrived. It was with a universal tremor

pervading my every feeling, that I bent my steps towards the Opera-house, where I was to meet Rosalie.

It was a beautiful calm evening, and as I passed some mansions, the balconies of which were filled with flowers, and a soft wind wafted their perfume, my thoughts reverted to past days.

Slight withal may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside for ever. It may be a sound,
A tone of music—summer's eve or spring—
A flower—the wind—the ocean which shall wound,
Striking the electric chain by which we're darkly bound.

The odour of these flowers brought back to my mind, Fairbourn, that abode of peace, and all its sweet associations; Rosalie in her happy favoured childhood, and now what was she? the immolated slave—the tool of a sordid ruffian.

The crowd of carriages, which extended along the whole street, through which I passed, before I reached the Opera-house, was unusually great—the multitude before the doors was dense, and I foresaw that the theatre would be filled to overflowing; how would Rosalie ever be able to undergo this gaze of thousands?

I went, at once, to her dressing-room, but found that she had not arrived. Then, for the first time, I discovered that it had been arranged, that one act of another opera was to be performed, before the piece commenced, in which she was to appear.

This was almost a relief to me, for I felt that I should have time to recover from the nervous trepidation which had seized me. Although it was still early, not a blank space was to be seen, within the walls of the theatre.

The overture was, at length, concluded, and the first performance commenced. I now began to be very anxious for Rosalie's arrival, and wondered that I did not see Arturo, who was to perform the part of *Lindor* in "*Nina*," and also make his first appearance on an English stage.

On inquiring, I found that he was in the theatre, and at last was ushered into his presence. He was standing close to a table, which was covered with flowers, and he appeared to be arranging them in a small basket. He was dressed for his part, and looked, indeed, well calculated to be the lover of "*Nina*."

As I entered, he lifted up his eyes from his occupation, and there was something in his countenance that was cheering. He looked happier than I had seen him for a long time. This, I soon found, arose from the circumstance of his anticipating, with vivid delight, acting with her that night—being able to pour forth, unrestrained, the impassioned feelings of his heart.

On expressing my anxiety on her account, he answered in a voice of exultation, "But, oh! Signor, consider what must be her success—how she will astonish and electrify all who hear her. *Che trionfo!*"

This was very little consolation to me. How slightly did such triumph avail in the balance of her happiness! To me it seemed that it would be a moment of humiliation rather than of pride. Her doom would then be sealed, she would be *bona fide* an actress, and my very soul shrunk from the idea, as if it had been but the first time that I had contemplated it.

At this moment Gabrielli entered. He was performing in the first piece, but had just stepped in,

to tell me that Rosalie had arrived; and, with a degree of anxiety and nervousness, which I had never before witnessed in him, he implored me to go to her.

"And, as you value her success," he said, "endeavour to calm her spirits—a failure now," he added, "would be destruction, and, with her extraordinary uncertain mood, I tremble for the result."

I went to her. To my surprise, she was perfectly composed, although certainly very pale. She was already attired in the dress that she was to wear upon the occasion. Myrtila was merely smoothing her lovely dark tresses, which were allowed to stray wildly about her face and bosom.

I felt my eyes filling very full of tears, when I looked upon her; she reminded me so forcibly of a victim decked for sacrifice; but I endeavoured to make a strong effort over my feelings, and tried to speak cheerfully; however, I saw that she evidently divined what was passing in my mind. She was silent, but took hold of my hand, and pressed it convulsively to her lips; there was something in this action which conveyed to me the impression—almost as forcibly as words could have done—the knowledge of all that was passing within her heart.

I never admired her so much; for the manner in which she commanded her feelings, was, indeed, in her, an act of real heroism. It was a very trying interval. To me it was really more painful, if possible, than to Rosalie. She seemed to have wound herself up to a pitch of self-possession, which I had not acquired.

The moment was drawing very near. Gabrielli came in and out, as often as he possibly could, and had I not known the sordid selfishness of the man's nature, I might have been inclined to pity the state of perturbation under which he was now suffering. Oh! what a change from his usual domineering—almost brutal manner! His demeanour now was quite crouching and fawning to Rosalie, with the view of coaxing her into confidence, and to produce the mood which was most advantageous to his purpose. For my part, I felt every moment that passed rendered me more useless, from the state of my own nerves; and I scarcely knew what was going forward.

I saw Gabrielli endeavour to persuade Rosalie to swallow a nervous draught he had brought with him, but she steadily declined it, saying, "Fear not, I am equal to it all!"

The overture to *Nina* now commenced, but I was told, afterwards, that the feeling of anxiety for the appearance of the *debutante* was so strong that even that strain of rich and impassioned harmony was thought tedious, so desirous were they to behold the new star, which was to eclipse every other in brilliancy.

How shall I describe my feelings when Gabrielli appeared to tell Rosalie that it was time to take her position on the stage? In the first two scenes she was merely a passive performer. *Nina* is represented as sleeping, in a reclining posture, on a bank at the extremity of the stage.

Without hesitation she arose, and, with a firm step, followed Gabrielli. He offered her his arm, but she motioned him to proceed, and immediately seized that of Arturo, who was standing gazing upon her with eyes in which the expression of anxiety, and the tenderest love were mingled. Without any demur, she at once placed herself in an attitude so unexpressibly graceful, that it admitted of no improvement, and elicited the warmest praise from Gabrielli. I looked upon her as there she lay, so white—so motionless, and, I thought, poor girl, that it would not have given me much more agony to have known that she was calmly sleeping

* What triumph!

in her last repose; for, on her rising, how much had she to encounter! By her side, Arturo placed a basket of most beautiful flowers, and he likewise scattered many a fragrant blossom round her.

As for me, I hardly knew what to do; whether to remain and watch her proceedings, or to rush into the dressing-room, and by endeavouring to shut out all sound and sight, remain there in darkness till all was over. However—no—I could not fly. I was spell-bound—fascinated to the spot.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The piece proceeded. The first scene was over and also the second. Gabrielli, who performed the part of the father, was singing the last *aria*, which was to precede the appearance of *Nina*. It was evident, even to the audience, that it was difficult for him to get through the part, so painfully was he labouring under anxiety. This was attributed to the most amiable feeling—that of paternal solicitude; and the spectators, who are always alive to good natured sympathy, were loud in their plaudits, seeking to re-assure him, and to evince that they appreciated his sentiments.

The song, itself, was one of a very plaintive description; the tremulous accents of his voice, and the perturbation, which was really not now feigned, rendered the scene already quite affecting, and prepared the minds of the spectators for much tragic effect. The words ran thus:—

"No che padre io piu non sono
Gemo in van, non ho piu figlia.
Chi mi regge e mi consiglia?
Son dal cielo in abbandona,
Sono io stesso in odio a me."

The moment became one of intense and painful interest. *Nina* was now looked for, and every instant seemed an age to the excited minds of the expecting audience. It was, I have since heard, an almost breathless interval of suspense.

Gabrielli had uttered his last sentence:

"Adesso corro ad abbracciarla—Oh Dio!"

but still *Nina* did not move.

Arturo, who stood by my side was in a state of almost frantic agitation.

"Gracious powers!" he cried, "what is to be done? She stirs not—perhaps she has fainted!"

There was considerable commotion prevailing around. The prompter seemed confounded; no one appeared to know what course to pursue—all was consternation. A pause ensued, which was most frightful to those who understood the extreme peril and uncertainty of the case. However it was soon over, for, with a suddenness which was like a stroke of electricity to every one, *Nina* started from her reeling position, and instead of walking forward with slow and languid steps, with a piercing shriek she flew towards the centre of the stage, and there she stood transfixed; her hands clasped over her bosom, her eyes riveted with a sort of wild stare upon the sea of faces which met her affrighted gaze.

I believe nothing ever produced such a thrilling—such a startling effect, as this unexpected action. It was quite unpremeditated on her part, and not according to the manner in which she had practised to appear; but, had she studied the effect for years, it would have been impossible to have

proved more successful. At once the feelings of the audience were attacked in their strong-hold.

The beautiful and really maniac appearance of the lovely girl, who, like a vision, so suddenly presented herself before them, instantaneously affected all beholders. Even before she opened her lips to pour forth her wild melodious strains, every heart was bleeding for the sorrows which were expressed by her speaking countenance.

A burst of the most enthusiastic applause greeted her; and it was fortunate that its duration gave her time to collect her scattered senses. She told me afterwards, that as she lay on the bench, her self-possession appeared gradually to die away, and she began to feel that it would be impossible for her to make the effort.

"But at length," she added, "I suddenly heard the voice of Gabriella pronounce my name. I believe it reached no other ears, but it always seems to penetrate to mine; and that instinctive feeling of terror with which he inspires me, urged me forward; it startled me from the state of immobility in which I was plunged, and, forgetting every thing else, with a frightened bound I rushed forward, and scarcely knowing what I was about, found myself face to face with the multitude."

The shouts of approbation which her appearance excited, seemed to affect her much less than I could have imagined. She told me it was astonishing how little she heeded, or even heard them.

Her thoughts reverted, immediately, to her part and to the positive necessity of exertion; and, as soon as silence was imposed, she commenced her song, and, to my inexpressible surprise and relief, her voice, although it trembled on the first few notes, became firm and melodious, and she executed that enchanting strain—"Il mio ben quando verra," in a manner which my poor description would but feebly portray. Those who were so fortunate as to hear it, must ever remember the impression it produced upon all.

Such was the effect that the tear of sympathy fell from almost every eye.

Perhaps there are few compositions more touching. Every word speaks for itself, and now each note appeared to swell from a heart half broken. A loud burst of enthusiastic applause ensued, and "encore," resounded from many quarters; but it was not persisted in, evidently out of respect and consideration for the young *debutante*, whose fragile form little accorded with the extraordinary volume of voice which proceeded from her delicate frame.

I have often heard that there never was an audience who appeared more completely absorbed and attracted. A universal silence prevailed in every part of the theatre. It seemed that the usual business of amusement, which generally draws people to the opera, was suspended. All were motionless, transfixed in mute attention. *Rosalie* appeared to possess at once a miraculous control over those who beheld her. Like a "stream of rich distilled perfumes," her voice seemed to shed a mournful, though sweet emotion, around their every feeling.

As the Opera proceeded, she appeared to gain perfect self-possession, and entered, most completely, into the spirit of the character she was personating. And truly did she identify the poor distracted *Nina*! It was almost too much—too affecting to behold, at the same time it was certainly sublime to contemplate. There was a distension in the large pupil of her eye, which very much increased the appearance of their size. When she first commenced she was very pale, although her colour had been assisted by art, to prevent the look of ghastliness which the stage lights always produce; how-

ever, her own excitement and exertion soon spread the brightest carnation over her fair skin, therefore, aided by the rouge, her complexion appeared most brilliant, and added so much to the sparkling lustre of her eyes, that their splendour was almost inconceivable.

Her acting also was superbly natural, every eye was riveted upon the stage, and tears coursed each other down many a lovely countenance, for her pathetic accents seemed to tell a tale of woe that partook too truly of reality. So deeply were the public engrossed by the beautiful being before them, that they had almost forgotten there was another aspirant for fame to welcome that evening.

Arturo had yet to appear, and although the character he was to personify did not afford great scope for a genius such as his, still I was certain, that with his feelings, acting as he would so completely *con amore*, ample justice would be done to the part of Nina's passionate lover.

Poor fellow! vividly do I remember all he suffered whilst Rosalie proceeded; his emotions partook of a mixture of agitation, admiration and exulting triumph, which shook his frame most violently. At one moment he wept, and in another he was grasping my hand, trembling lest she should fail in any very difficult passage. And then his bursts of applause—the wild ecstatic manner in which he threw his arms around me, hugging me for joy!

Gabrielli was likewise in a state of nervous, happy exultation; but I could not participate in any thing he felt. I was angry that the wretch should be reaping such advantageous fruits from his cruelty and cupidity. However, as Rosalie proceeded, she seemed even to surpass herself, and hysterical sobs were heard in many directions.

But what must have been the feelings of some of those who were present—the friends of her childhood, who now again beheld her for the first time, after a long and painful separation. The effect was indeed agonizing, and the gentle Gertrude was becoming every moment more painfully agitated; it was evident to all around that it would be quite impossible for her to sit out the whole performance; but still no persuasion could induce her to leave her post.

And Lady Constance sat in her box, with the elderly chaperone who always attended her; how did she feel while contemplating the beautiful, the talented being, whose charms she had so longed, yet dreaded to behold? Far more dangerous did she find her, than her anxious doubting heart had even anticipated. She wept, and I fear her tears flowed from more than one cause. "No wonder," she inwardly ejaculated, "that such powerful interest has ever been excited. She is indeed fascinating, and there is something in her beauty so peculiar;" and bitterly did Constance sigh, as her thoughts reverted to Fitz-Ernest, who came not to her—who she knew was at that moment gazing with tender admiration upon the too lovely girl—the object of such universal homage.

But now there was a reaction amongst the audience. *Lindor* appeared before them, and for a brief moment even Rosalie was less heeded, so much applause was elicited by the aspect of the young Italian.

He was truly the wretched *Lindor*, full of anxious love—of agonizing suspense, arriving after a long absence, and finding nothing but wretchedness awaiting him. The duet which followed between Gabrielli and Arturo, was splendid and effective.

The spectators appeared to have a divided interest, for the young actor was, in his way, as great a

prize as Rosalie. I have often expatiated on the manly beauty of his form, and now enhanced by the advantage of stage effect, he certainly was a most striking model of youthful grace. When the young debutants both appeared upon the boards never did two beings seem so completely formed to act together.

A feeling of gladness and confidence, beamed from Rosalie's eyes when he was near her, and the real affection with which he inspired her, gave to every word she uttered, an air of truth which rendered her acting even more than ever perfect. It seemed but the unrestrained effusion of the heart, and at the moment of thrilling interest, when Nina recognises her lost lover, there appeared to be a simultaneous feeling amongst all those who saw her; it seemed as if they scarcely knew how sufficiently to express their excessive enthusiasm; the piece concluded, the whole house rising, with shouts and plaudits giving vent to the demonstration of their satisfaction, and the curtain dropped amidst thundering peals of applause.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The admiring multitude were not satisfied by these loud acclamations. They wished even more fully to attest their rapturous feelings. They must again feast their eyes upon the perfect being, who had thus entranced their senses, and pour forth the incense of their praise. There was a general call for her reappearance, which was becoming every moment more importunate and peremptory.

But Rosalie after having done wonders—crowned herself with brilliant success—surpassed the most sanguine expectations of the *exigeant* Gabrielli, who was now cringing, and almost worshipping at her feet—so much was he delighted—so more than satisfied; after having thus performed her part—thus exerted herself, the flame of excitement appeared burnt out, and exhausted—drooping she had thrown herself into my arms, and, leaning her head on my shoulder, tears fell silently from her eyes.

We conveyed her to the dressing room, and I prevailed upon her to swallow a little wine; but poor child her trial was not over.

The noise in the theatre was tremendous—unceasing. It seemed to grate upon the fatigued ear of Rosalie.

"Will they never be silent!" she exclaimed in a voice of impatience.

At this moment Gabrielli entered, looking perplexed and anxious.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a hesitating humble tone, "I am sorry to annoy you farther to-night, but I find it impossible to do otherwise; I fear you must make your appearance before the audience, who are so delighted—so charmed with your acting."

The man was now all respect, all submission, but Rosalie, who had sunk upon a sofa, with an air of petulance waved him off.

"No," she said, "surely I have done enough, I will not—cannot."

Gabrielli looked at me beseechingly and whispered, "Assist me, I implore you."

I saw that there was no possibility of escape for her, and therefore endeavoured to prevail upon her to submit. But for some moments I despaired of being able to move her.

This was a very painful interval. The clamours of the audience still continued with almost frightful vehemence. At length she started with an air

of desperation from the recumbent position she had taken on the couch, and all dishevelled and pale as she was, walked quickly forward, resolutely declining Myrtilla's efforts to remedy in a degree the disorder of her attire. Gabrielli was obliged to be satisfied, and Rosalie was led forward by Arturo, whose name had also been loudly vociferated by the audience, and Gabrielli was soon called upon to receive his meed of congratulation.

Rosalie's appearance had much changed, even in the short period which had intervened, since she had before stood in the presence of the admiring multitude. She had left them the animated—the restored heroine, breathing love and happiness. Now, with disordered tresses; and cheeks blanched by the tears which had bathed them, she was again the distracted—plaintive—moon-struck *Nina*.

On turning my eyes with rapidity round the now animated walls of the crowded theatre, I could perceive every eye fixed upon her, all with deep intensity regarding her. And there poor Rosalie stood with her hand, pressed tightly upon her beating, aching heart. She courted profoundly, gratefully, but had not yet once raised her heavy swollen eyes.

Little did she appreciate the tumultuous tribute of rapture with which she was again greeted; it sounded distractingly on her senses. The ordeal, however, was nearly at an end. The audience had satiated their longing gaze by another view of these two youthful and most interesting beings. Rosalie was making what she hoped to be her last obeisance, when she was startled by finding at her feet a *guirlande* of flowers, which had been thrown from a box just above where she stood.

This box had been closely curtained during the performance, and I had suspected whom it contained, but now all concealment was at an end.—The curtains were undrawn, and Fitz-Ernest, with Lord Henry by his side, stood prominently forward—they were both gazing with the most intense anxiety upon Rosalie. Surprised by the unexpected sight of the flowers that were raised from the ground by Gabrielli, and presented to her, she instinctively looked up in the direction from whence they came, and she then caught the glance of Fitz-Ernest—beaming with an expression of the warmest admiration—of unexpired affection. It was too much for the already exhausted spirits of the poor girl. She wildly gazed for a moment upon a countenance whose image had never left her mind, and then nature, quite overpowered—overwrought, gave way, and she sunk into a fainting-fit, which was fearful from its duration, and total suspension of life.

This finale was truly a *coup de theatre*, and Rosalie could have little imagined how completely it placed her at once at the very climax of celebrity—for an English audience is of all classes the most easily predisposed to sympathy, particularly when it is the young and beautiful who lay claim to it—therefore, it is not to be wondered at, that, with their feelings previously excited, and on the *cui vive*, universal interest was displayed at the sudden indisposition, and parting finale of the poor *cantatrice*.

But if strangers were thus moved, how was it with those individuals who felt they had a long established claim to suffer for her?

In Lord Belmont's box the scene was very distressing. Lady Gertrude, who insisted on remaining to see the last of her friend, was now in a state of nervousness which really alarmed those around her. She was for flying at once to seek her poor Rosalie—to administer to her restoration; and it was difficult to pacify her, until her father promised

to go himself to ascertain the state in which she now was.

It was not without some exertion that his Lordship could gain admittance behind the scenes; it being a first appearance, all access to that part of the theatre had been closed; however, by sending for Gabrielli, he was enabled to enter these forbidden precincts, and soon found himself at the door of Rosalie's dressing-room.

The scene which there presented itself, was of a most striking and affecting nature. Rosalie was stretched upon a sofa; the sombre covering of which contrasted forcibly with the fair lifeless-looking form extended upon it. There lay Rosalie, like a lily broken by the wind, prostrate on the dark cold earth. Her black hair was scattered over her white skin and dress, and partially concealed her face. One of her arms hung listlessly over the side of the sofa, and there was a still, exhausted appearance pervading the whole form, which looked, indeed, like death itself.

But Lord Belmont had been forestalled. There were others whose anxiety had even surpassed his own, and he was startled by perceiving his two eldest sons.

On one side of Rosalie's couch knelt Fitz-Ernest, holding her cold hand within his own, which he seemed endeavouring to warm into life by the tender kisses he imprinted on it. There lay Rosalie stood Lord Henry, his head bent upon his hand; he was striving to hide the tears which this mournful spectacle had drawn from his affectionate young heart.

Lord Belmont, who was the kindest of human beings, fully and truly sympathised in the feeling so deeply evinced by his sons; and if any thing could have increased the interest he had always entertained for the poor girl, it was redoubled tenfold by seeing her thus powerless—crushed—and still so lovely!

He inquired eagerly what could be done; and I, who was almost beside myself with terror and anxiety, was just able to say that Gabrielli had gone for medical advice.

The kind, good lord! the scene is now vividly before my imagination. I can remember well the expression of his benevolent countenance as he immediately tendered his assistance to aid the endeavours they were using to restore her.

He raised her in his own arms, and parted the dark masses of hair from her marble forehead, which he tenderly bathed with *eau de Cologne*, at the same time desiring Myrtilla to chafe her hands.

But the one which Fitz-Ernest held was not relinquished. He still knelt with it clasped in his own, looking almost as pale, as statue-like, as the fainting form beside him.

Soon Gabrielli entered with a surgeon, who pronounced her state to be that of syncope, produced by perfect prostration of power in the system, and he proceeded to force between her lips some stimulants.

So agitated and alarmed were we, that we forgot all caution, and allowed her to revive without withdrawing from her view those who surrounded her. After heaving a deep sigh, by slow degrees she unclosed her eyes; what a spectacle met her bewildered gaze! She was in the arms of her beloved—her revered patron, Lord Belmont. Whose kind pressure warmed into life the hand still clasped in his? Fitz-Ernest's—the object which had stamped itself in the utmost, secret recesses of a devoted heart—whose idea had been dwelt upon until it had almost been deified. It was a secret which she would have rather died than reveal; but if we could

have penetrated into the mysterious workings of her mind, we might have discovered that ardent, enthusiastic love had burnt in her breast for years, with a flame which, though silent, was steady and consuming. "She sought like the stricken deer to weep in silence and loneliness, and brood over the barbed arrow that rankled in her soul."

Unfortunate Rosalie! In referring to some of the pages of her journal, I discovered that this moment of returning consciousness was ranked by her, as the very happiest of her whole existence. "It was," she expressed herself, "like waking in Paradise," so unexpected was the bliss that awaited her. And far from its doing her an injury, as we might have suspected, the soothing balm of exquisite delight, seemed to act as a composing elixir to her agitated spirits.

She looked round, and met the kind expression of the excellent Marquis, who said affectionately, "How delighted I am to see you better, my dear child! But now you must allow me to place you gently on these cushions, for I must go to Gertrude—poor Gertrude, who is almost as ill as you have been, from anxiety on your account. I will return, my dear," he continued, "after I have satisfied her mind, and placed her safely in the carriage; these good people must take care of you till I come back."

Then did Rosalie turn her blushing face towards Fitz-Ernest; but it was soon again averted, for even then her conscious heart whispered to her that it must not, ought not to be. There were feelings lurking there, which warned her that there was danger to her happiness, to her peace of mind, concealed in every thought—every look which she bestowed on him.

But how resist the fascination of this moment, whilst by her side stood the noble, manly youth, softened almost to the feelings of a woman, as he lingered near her. He could scarcely command his voice to speak, but by his affectionate actions, his looks of tender solicitude, she was not slow to discover the benignant nature of his sentiments towards her. And the warm-hearted young Henry! He was much more demonstrative than his brother, and by turns was exhibiting the expression of joy, admiration and affection. But whilst this scene was passing, where was Arturo?

He was pacing, with agitated steps, to and fro, not daring to enter the room, for at that moment, he had sufficient command over his feelings, to abstain from placing himself in a situation that would have excited passions, which unfortunately were too dangerously afloat in his nature. He did not dare to intrude where he felt his presence was not required; but still he could not resolve to leave the vicinity of the spot which contained her he so worshipped—so loved.

Whilst he was standing for a moment, anxiously interrogating some one, who had just quitted the chamber, he was accosted by Sir Francis Somerville, who, in a hurried, eager manner, asked if he could give him any intelligence concerning the *Signora Rosalia*. Arturo's feelings towards this young man had always partaken of much bitterness; the very mention of his name, appeared to shake his whole frame with shuddering dislike, and I had witnessed, with uneasiness, the looks of rage and jealous anger which he cast towards him, during the time the Opera proceeded. He had pointed out the Baronet to me with menacing expressions, as he sat alone in a stage box, with an opera glass fixed almost immovably upon Rosalie. I saw that, as the impetuous Italian glanced fiercely at him, he gnashed his teeth with impotent fury.

The temperament of this youth was fearfully

hot, and all my admonitions had, I regret to say, failed in subduing his impetuous nature. I always trembled with direful forebodings when I contemplated what might be his fate. He could, in some degree, tolerate Rosalie's feelings towards the young Belmont's gratitude—early associations might be ascribed to them; but Sir Francis—what right had he, he thought, to presume to look at her, to think of her; and now, at this time, when he was more than usually excited, what a moment to be confronted face to face, and to be accosted by the man he so mortally hated!

As Somerville spoke, Arturo turned his dark fierce eyes upon him, with an expression of disdainful anger.

"By what right," he answered, in Italian, for in that language he had been addressed by Sir Francis, "do you claim the privilege of asking the question?"

The baronet at first looked surprised at this uncalled for reply, but soon perceiving the enraged glances of the Italian, he felt his own hot blood begin to rise, at what he considered the extreme impertinence of the youth.

"And by what right have you," he exclaimed, "to waive the claims of courtesy and speak to me thus?" and he looked the very personification of pride and disdain.

At this moment, I fortunately chanced to pass. I instantly detected the irritating bearing of the two young men, the sinister expression which I so well understood in the Italian, and the haughty offended mien of the Baronet.

"Arturo," I whispered, "go and see if Signor Gabrielli's carriage is ready. Rosalie is about to depart."

This speech changed the current of his ideas in a moment; he exclaimed—

"*Grazie al Cielo! e dunque tornata in vita!*"

And without even waiting to cast another furious glance at Sir Francis, he flew to obey my commands; and I then, politely addressing myself to Somerville, who still lingered, requested he would kindly withdraw. I told him that Rosalie was soon to pass that way, and that as she was still in a very exhausted nervous state, it would be more agreeable to her feelings that her exit should be as private as possible. He signified his immediate willingness to comply with my wishes, merely remaining to pour upon me many anxious inquiries concerning her, all of which I answered coldly, but in civility.

It was no small relief to me when I at length bowed him off, and saw him depart to his box.

Soon after Rosalie was sufficiently restored to be able to return home; but she did not leave her young friends till they had made her promise to visit them at Belmont House, the following day.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

From the period I have just recorded, a bright gleam of sunshine seemed, for a passing moment, to radiate the darkened horizon of my heroine's existence. She was human, therefore it would be unnatural to suppose that she was not gratified, and in a degree elated, by the rich incense of praise and adulation which poured upon her from every quarter. In fact, she had become the reigning star of the London season. There was so much of romance, which is always attractive to the generality of mankind pervading her history, and so impene-

* God be praised, then she has revived.

trable a mantle of respectability cast over her, from the marked and public countenance of a family who stood so high in the estimation of every one—so strict in virtue and in principle as the Belmonts—that she was looked upon by the admiring multitudes as a species of *rara avis*. There was a degree of simplicity, of innate innocence in the character of Rosalie, which at this time struck me peculiarly, as being as extraordinary as it was beautiful.

I almost thought it out of nature; for although at times I could detect something like gratified pride, still it was not as it would have been with others. It was with humility, and certainly with somewhat of indifference, that she received the universal homage which was laid at her feet. But I was hardly then aware of the peculiar bias of her mind. It was not formed for the matter-of-fact business of this world; it was of a quality too susceptible of the finer feelings—too exalted—to be much influenced by worldly vanity.

From the circumstances of her indisposition on the night of her first performance, the utmost solicitude had been excited; and the out of the way diurnal street, in which Gabrielli had taken up his abode, was literally thronged with carriages, all drawn there with the same intention—that of making anxious inquiries after the health of the interesting *debutante*. Had Rosalie prized such considerations, proud might she have been, for not only were many of those, who thus honoured her, amongst the first nobility of the land, but even royalty itself, deigned to be interested in her behalf. The day after her appearance, she was too ill to be able to leave her bed, and her anxious friends at Belmont House were again disappointed in the hope of seeing her; for although free permission had been given for Rosalie's visit to them, their parents would not hear of any of the Ladies de Vere going to the house of the Italian. There was nothing left, therefore, for Lady Gertrude, but to send Mademoiselle Kramer, in order that she might gain from her every particular concerning the state of her friend.

However, poor actresses have not much time allowed them for the indulgence of indisposition; many an aching head and heart are obliged to yield to the imperative call of a rehearsal; and little do we think, when we witness performances, in which so much talent and grace are displayed, and which appear to flow with such apparent ease, what fatigue and labour brought about this perfection!

On the following Saturday, Rosalie was again to appear in the character of *Nina*, and, on the Tuesday afterwards, another, and more arduous task was assigned to her; and Gabrielli, elated by her success on the previous evening, was more than ever ardent in the cause. His avarice seemed to become sharper, the more he was secure of gain; and I saw, with disgust, that his impatience could scarcely brook the delay of even a few hours, which his victim was obliged to devote to rest and quiet, in order to recruit her exhausted frame.

At length, however, her reward was at hand; and who can describe her feelings, when she found herself, once more, pressed in the arms of kind and constant friends!

I accompanied her to Belmont House, and it was a joyful, though very nervous moment, for I hardly knew how her shattered nerves would stand such excessive happiness. It was, indeed, a pleasing sight; and, truly, there are scenes in real life, as replete with dramatic effect, as any of those we see represented on the stage; a striking picture might have been imagined in the reunion of two young

girls, both so lovely and yet so different, as Lady Gertrude and Rosalie.

But, I think I was most affected, by being the spectator of her first introduction to Lady Belmont. After Rosalie had been some time with the young ladies she turned to me, and requested I would go with her to the Marchioness.

Lady Gertrude immediately started up, offering to be her conductress.

"Let me take you to her, dear Rosalie," she said; "I do not like to lose sight of you for a moment."

"No, dearest Lady Gertrude!" she exclaimed, anxiously; "let me have a short interview with your mother; I have something to say which is for her private ear."

"What! have you secrets from me, Rosalie?" exclaimed Lady Gertrude, reproachfully.

"No," she answered, "not one; but my mind will be easier, when I have conversed with that excellent lady a short time alone—so grant me this indulgence, for upon it hangs all my future happiness."

"Then, you must not be long," Gertrude replied, as she allowed her, reluctantly, to depart.

Lady Belmont was in her boudoir. She was alone, with the exception of a beautiful little boy, who was seated on a footstool by her side. She was writing, but, as we approached, she raised her eyes, and beheld Rosalie, whom I was leading by the hand. She really, almost started, so much was she struck by the loveliness that appeared before her.

And never did Rosalie look to more advantage. Her colour partook of that carnation tint, which excitement always lent to her complexion.

"Rosalie, my love," Lady Belmont exclaimed, "how delighted I am to see you!" and she held out her arms, and pressed the happy, grateful girl, in a most affectionate, cordial embrace.

My heart swelled with pleasure in witnessing this interview; and oh! it was beautiful to behold that graceful, dignified-looking woman, upon whose stately aspect nobility was so strongly stamped, yet, from whose benign countenance beamed every kindly, every tender feeling, as she bent, caressingly, over the humble, lowly girl, who knelt at her feet. She clasped the Marchioness's hand in hers, which she covered with fervent kisses.

I soon withdrew, as Rosalie had begged, before we entered, that I would do so, but the Marchioness afterwards favoured me with an account of what had passed between them.

"How can I sufficiently express to your ladyship my gratitude," she said, "for all your unvaried kindness towards me, especially for this last indulgence—permission to be where I now am."

"My dear girl," replied Lady Belmont, affectionately raising her, and making her sit on the couch by her side, "it has ever been a pleasure to remember you, and I rejoice to see you here once more."

"And it is upon this subject," replied Rosalie, firmly, though mournfully, "that I now wish to speak to your ladyship. Once more, indeed, I am in your presence—within the walls of your honoured home, but, may I ask the question? is it with your free-will, dear madam, or only kindly to satisfy others, that you again admit me into the bosom of your family—I, who am a public actress—the reputed daughter of a man from whose character, I am too well aware, your pure mind must shrink? Is it not repugnant to your ideas, that I should be even the occasional companion of your high-born innocent daughters? I am come here, alone to beseech you to satisfy my anxiety on this point. I have lived with people whose conduct

has harassed my every feeling; I have seen the degradation of vice; I am exposed to its view even daily; but," she added, meekly folding her hands upon her bosom, "thanks be to God!—to what I owe to you dear lady—to Mr. Leslie, and, I may also say, thanks to the virtue which nature has implanted in my heart,—I am still unchanged. All I have undergone, I humbly trust, has strengthened me in rectitude; and, although I have lived in the atmosphere of wretchedness, it is as abhorrent to me—as loathing to my sight—as it would be were it to meet the eyes of either of those sweet beings I have just quitted!"

"But," she continued, interrupting Lady Belmont, who was about to speak, "forgive me, for thus trespassing farther on your attention, but, perhaps, you will kindly allow me, at once, to unburden the fulness of my heart, and then I will not again tax your forbearance. The ardent wish, which has haunted me by night, and has never, for a moment, deserted me by day; for the realization of which I have panted, with a degree of anxiety, you, dear madam, can never imagine, who are surrounded by every earthly felicity; this longing desire I have now attained. I have seen you all once more—again have you smiled, with affection upon me, and I ought to be, and am satisfied."

But this last word was pronounced with a heavy deep-drawn sigh, which told how much of self-devotion—of resignation—had been necessary, to enable her to utter it; and Lady Belmont told me afterwards, there was something so irresistibly plaintive in the pathos of her voice, that she felt she had not power to interrupt her. It was with difficulty she restrained her own tears.

Rosalie continued, "I am come to you to say, that weighed down as I am with the excess of your goodness, I never will be ungrateful. I could not bear that your indulgence towards me, should be at variance with the dictates of the strict principles you have laid down, with regard to your children. I beseech you, therefore, if you for a moment imagine that my presence will be detrimental to them, either in the eyes of the censuring world, or in any other respect, say but the word, my kind, my excellent benefactress, and your wishes shall be implicitly obeyed; you may rely upon me. Far be it from my thoughts, that you should discontinue your kindness, your good will, I feel certain, I shall ever retain; your eye of protection will never be withdrawn from me, and although I may not see the hand of benevolence which is stretched out to befriend me, though my trial may be sore, it will only be of shorter duration—for as sure as there is a heaven to which, I in all humility aspire, as certain is it that my days are numbered. I feel it, dear lady, here," she exclaimed, as she pressed her hand to her chest; "there is my secret. But you weep," she continued, suddenly turning and perceiving that the eyes of Lady Belmont were overflowing with drops of tender sympathy, "are those precious tears for me, the honoured, favoured Rosalie? or are they tears of pity, forerunners of my doom?" and again she fell on her knees before Lady Belmont, and hid her face in the folds of her garment.

"My sweet Rosalie," at length Lady Belmont replied, much affected, "I cannot bear to hear you talk thus. Compose yourself and listen to me. I will be candid and explicit. But fear not, I have nothing to say that can give you pain. It delights me to hear you speak so sensibly, to find that your mind is replete with principles so just, so proper. I feel that I can rely upon you at once, and when you are with us, I shall think of you, only as the

Rosalie of Fairbourne; I shall forget the other character, which you are obliged to personify. I have heard from Mr. Leslie, how nobly, how beautifully you have conducted yourself through the various trials under which you have been placed; I admire, I honour you for it. I have only one thing to add," continued the Marchioness, with some slight hesitation, "Rosalie, you must be aware of your great attractions, therefore, you must take care not to bewitch the senses of my wild Henry. I see you have already made a conquest of one of my sons," and she smiled as she looked at the little Algernon, who during this conversation, had been watching the countenance of Rosalie, with his sweet intelligent eyes; by degrees he had crept closer and closer to her, and at length having fairly nestled himself upon her knees, and thrown one of his arms around her neck, he looked up into her tearful face with an expression, in which curiosity and kindly sympathy were mingled. Her sweetness and loveliness had attracted even his infantine heart.

The last words of Lady Belmont had assailed the heart of Rosalie with many varied feelings. There was much of joy, of gratification amongst the crowd of sensations which were overpowering her. But no bliss in this world is without its alloy; in what the Marchioness had said, there was one allusion, that stung her with a pang of remorse. She felt she had exalted herself too highly in the opinion of her patroness, that she had not laid bare to her, the whole secrets of her heart; but as she hid her blushing face amidst the clustering curls, which grew in such profusion on the fair head of the sweet child, and whilst she pressed him fondly to her bosom, she mentally breathed a vow that all her presumptuous, though fondly cherished thoughts and feelings, should be immolated at the shrine of her gratitude. She would tear the beloved idol from her heart, though by this deed, she would leave it, bleeding—hopeless; but so she resolved, and Rosalie's spirit was firm, her self-devotion perfect.

At this period of the interview, they were interrupted. The door was quickly opened, and now was the trial of her fortitude, her self-possession. A countenance presented itself to her view, it was no other than that of Fitz-Ernest, who, having heard that Rosalie was with his mother, at once determined to seek her. He was followed by Gertrude, who thought she had been quite long enough separated from her friend.

Rosalie moved not—spoke not. She only held the little Algernon closer in her arms. She felt her courage failing; the moment of enthusiasm was past, and with a countenance, pale as death, she at length lifted up her head from the silken bed, on which she had laid her cheek, to receive with some semblance of composure, the warm, the affectionate greeting of Fitz-Ernest; but she had not power to utter a sentence. She was only able to raise her eyes for a moment, to take her last look of love, for, from that instant all must change! And then again she bent over the boy, and prayed for support, for strength; the spirit may pray when no words are spoken, and the only hope which sustains the wretched, is the blessed idea, that our merciful Father hears the groan of the labouring heart which no words can utter.

I had by this time joined the party. There was a brief pause in the conversation; each seemed absorbed with some feeling which made him silent. Lady Belmont was looking with a mother's eye upon the sweet picture which Rosalie and her darling boy at that moment represented; it might have been compared to an animated likeness of

some of the beautiful designs of the Madonna and child. A sunbeam from the window had fallen upon the two figures, and threw a rich tint of colouring over them, which rendered the effect most striking.

The feelings which agitated Fitz-Ernest and paled his cheek were, perhaps, of a very varied nature. They were not agreeable certainly, for a gloom over-shadowed his countenance. Perchance he thought of his plighted vows, and his heart smote him for his want of allegiance to her, who had a right to claim his every thought; he might have been thinking with regret, of the claims which in honour bound him to another.

Lady Gertrude did not allow the silence long to continue; she said, "Mamma, what have you been doing to Rosalie? she is looking so melancholy, so pale. Dear Algy," she continued, "you are tiring Rosalie; come to Gertrude." And she endeavoured to take the child into her own arms; but there seemed to be a mutual sympathy, suddenly raised in the bosoms of these two new acquaintances, for the child appeared loth to leave Rosalie, and said:

"I don't tire you, pretty lady, do I?" She loves me, Gertrude, very much, I'm sure, and I love her, and Algy will try to make her happy, and not so sad;" and the little fellow kissed her, and again looked with much sensibility into the countenance of Rosalie.

"Rosalie," said Lady Belmont, speaking cheerfully, anxious to re-assure her young friend, about whom there was a degree of irresistible charm which influenced every one in a most extraordinary and powerful manner, and which had wrought its spell already upon the Marchioness, "Fitz-Ernest and Gertrude have a great deal to tell you, many confessions to make, and new friends, to whom they will be desirous to introduce you."

"Oh, mamma!" said Gertrude, smiling and blushing; "do you think I could be an hour in Rosalie's society, without letting her into all my secrets; she has already heard my little history, but Fitz-Ernest has his to relate."

Rosalie started, perceptibly, and saw that there was a glance of eagerness in her eyes, as she quickly turned them, for a moment, on Fitz-Ernest, who coloured violently, and began to busy himself in looking over some books that lay upon the table; but he spoke not a word.

I felt that this was a very nervous moment, and would have given worlds to change the subject, but Lady Belmont seemed determined to pursue it, and continued!—"Yes, indeed, Rosalie, we shall be all gainers; you will have new and kind friends, and I shall acquire the addition of another delightful son and daughter. I see, Fitz-Ernest leaves it to me to tell his tale. We are to have a double marriage; he is to be united to the Lady Constance Delaval, and she is a choice worthy of our most fond affection."

Fitz-Ernest still remained silent; he seemed quite absorbed in the contemplation of the prints before him; but he now started up suddenly, and approaching the window, said, in a hurried tone of voice, "I must go for a moment, and give some directions to my servant," and immediately left the room.

No one knew, but myself, what was passing in his mind. Alas! I felt many of my sad forebodings likely to be realized, and then I looked at Rosalie; but, again, her face was hid from my view, she was still bending over the child, and her dark hair fell over, and shaded her countenance. Fortunately, we were interrupted by the entrance of others, and when she turned towards me, she was composed, though very pale.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

This ought to have been a smiling season to Rosalie, for kindness and encouragement were showered upon her from all sides. It was not from one, alone, of the Belmont family; every member of it seemed to vie with each other in the demonstrations of their affection and interest, from the head of the house, the good Marquis—to the least, though not less favoured of the party, the lovely little Algernon.

And Rosalie's heart did swell with gratitude, and a feeling of comfort—of security—soothed, and gave a more healthful tone to her mind. She felt an elevation of spirit within her:—like a flower that had been blighted and half-broken, by the ravaging effects of an east wind, and which, by degrees, raises its drooping head, softened by the mild drops of a refreshing shower, and warmed into life by the sunbeam, so were Rosalie's crushed affections brightened into something like happiness, by that genial glow which benevolence and sympathy impart to the aching heart. But, still, where can we look for unmeasured felicity? Not in this world of uncertainty, of disappointment.

In the midst of all this newly recovered comfort, the heart of our heroine was not without its pangs; there was one thorn ranking in it, which pressed, even deeper, into the wound. "The heart, alone, knoweth its own bitterness." It is one of those inscrutable mysteries of nature, which, to our eyes, are impenetrable, the interests that the soul has of its own, which are of a nature so totally distinct from those of the body. But, so it is; and it is as liable to disease, and to wounds as agonizing, as any of those to which the corporeal frame is subject, and often, far more grievous are the pangs which from thence proceed; for, if the disease which rankles in the heart—if that which should sustain the sufferer only serves to irritate and torment—to what quarter can the afflicted look for relief, or to what medicine apply? The dart is fixed in the breast, but there is no possibility of extracting it.

The professional career of Rosalie was most brilliant at this period. The countenance she received from the Belmont family, so unqualified and unlimited, rendered her still more conspicuous and interesting in the eyes of the world. I, a silent, though observant spectator of all that was passing, could not help feeling a little amused at seeing all Lady Belmont's scruples melt into air under the influence of the magical charm which my *protegee* seemed to exercise over all their senses; and, perhaps, nothing so completely laid hold of the heart of the mother, as the excessive affection and tenderness, which Rosalie evinced towards the youthful Algernon. He, certainly, was a charming child, and, added to his being the youngest of the family, which, very often, creates a peculiar feeling of love in the heart of a parent, he was a most fragile, delicate being, and precocious, to a degree, in intellect, which rendered all those who were so intensely interested about him fearfully anxious. He seemed too beautiful—too highly gifted, for a long existence in this world—too ethereal for any place but heaven!

"Oh, boy! of such as thou art oftenest made Earth's fragile idols; like a tender flower,
No strength in all thy freshness—prone to fade,
And, bending weakly to the thunder-shower,
Still, round the loved, thy heart found force to bind,
And clung, like woodbine shaken in the wind."

There was more than one charm that bound him in attraction to Rosalie. She could trace a most

striking likeness in him to Fitz-Ernest. Not only in feature did he resemble him, but the expression of his countenance in all his little actions, recalled to her constantly, the idea of his brother. It was quite extraordinary to witness the spell which seemed to influence both these young beings. The indulged boy, whose every wish was a command to his doating anxious parents, appeared at once to have fixed all his love upon Rosalie. He was always asking for her, and when she was in the house, could never be prevailed upon to leave her; if she would only sing to him, the effect it produced upon the child was really surprising. The little fellow was rapt, enchanted, and would evince a sensibility, very uncommon at his young age.

All this was very bewitching to the parents. Many of my readers may, perchance, be able to enter into the weakness of a mother's heart; and oftentimes did Lady Belmont softly lead the Marquis into the room where Rosalie was seated, unconscious that she was observed, with the sweet delicate looking child, half sleeping on her knee: whilst she sung to him in a subdued tone with that voice of unsurpassed loveliness, some long remembered ditty, once a favourite amongst the children at Belmont Abbey. It is easy to imagine that when the doating parents beheld this interesting picture, their hearts inclined towards the young girl, with admiration and love, and that they shut their eyes against any impediment, which reason might have suggested as wise and necessary precaution. As far as regarded their sons, they felt quite at ease about Fitz-Ernest. His engagement was his safeguard. Not for a moment did the idea of any obstruction to its completion enter their imagination; and when they thought of Lord Henry, the only other son who was grown up—and the Marquis and Marchioness did sometimes talk over the subject—they quickly stifled every little feeling of prudence, which might have presented itself to their minds, by recollecting that his nature was too *volage* for any serious fancy; and they had too great a reliance upon Rosalie's conscientious rectitude, to think that she would encourage attentions from him, should they assume a character different from the intercourse which had so long subsisted between them. Having thus satisfied themselves, Lord and Lady Belmont, whose only fault—could it be thus termed—was that of indulging, to the utmost excess, their children, whom they idolized, allowed matters to take their course; and Rosalie spent all the time she could spare from her laborious musical avocations, at Belmont House.

I watched all this with great anxiety, for I had a *presentiment* that all would not go on well. And oh! what a dreadful feeling is self-reproach! At this moment I still feel its stings rankling in my heart. I ought to have spoken out, and not to have allowed matters thus to proceed, for I guessed it all. I saw that there was torture in many hearts, there was a cross play going forward, which was working evils for all; I saw that Fitz-Ernest was unhappy, unsettled. It was a constant warring between principle, honour, duty, and evident inclination, and I know that he suffered deeply, during this period of infatuation, or fascination—by either name, I may designate it.

He felt himself bound by every tie to Lady Constance. The fair fame of his illustrious family was concerned in his fulfilling honourably his engagement. He was perfectly aware that the heart of one of the most amiable of human beings was devoted to him—that his coldness—his apparent neglect was paining it sadly. He had seen many a fear tremble in her mild eye as she watched his

countenance, which he felt but too truly was changed in its aspect, when he now addressed her. He was perfectly aware of the alteration, and although unable to command himself, he despised and deplored the weakness of his heart. However deprecating his own folly, still he continued spell-bound. He was hugging chains to his heart, which he felt were destruction, and in his present state of feelings, he had not even the consolation of pouring forth his embarrassing—his torturing thoughts; they must be stifled in secret; the slave of passion can unbosom himself to no friend, for instead of sympathy, what can he expect, save reproach or at best, contemptuous pity!

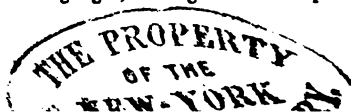
Fitz-Ernest's feelings, at this moment, were all at variance with each other—a strange mixture of contrariety. He was passionately enamoured of Rosalie—but still, strange to say, through all this maze of passion, there were sentiments towards Lady Constance, which lingered and hovered before his view. He could not forget her many excellencies, above all, her devoted love towards himself. And then he remembered, with grief, the anxious desire of his parents—whose wishes hitherto had been his dearest law—that this union should take place.

And Fitz-Ernest was not free from a degree of worldly pride. He had been educated with the strictest notions as to what was due to his rank and station in life; and he, the head of the family, was he not imperatively called upon to support its dignity? How could that be better accomplished than by a marriage with the high-born Constance, that charming accomplished girl, formed by nature and education for the exalted station in which she moved, and by every feminine attraction so calculated to render a husband happy.

Man is an extraordinary being. Passions, when they seize upon the mind, conquer and overpower him; the balance of his soul is lost, he is no longer his own master; he may be sensible of the wound, he may deplore it; but if that integrity of purpose, which ever before had strengthened him, is enfeebled and broken, if that to which he had recourse for the cure of other sorrows, has become the afflicted part, this, in the strictest sense, indeed, is the heart's own bitterness, from which it is not in the power of any external circumstance whatever to afford it relief. And true it is, that punishment always follows closely upon the footsteps of error. The agony of mind which Fitz-Ernest suffered, was retribution itself.

That excellent Lady Constance! It must ever be with respect and admiration, that I recall the remembrance of the manner in which she conducted herself throughout this most trying season. Perhaps I alone, amongst the party, was aware how much she felt, and how nobly, but with what feminine delicacy, she regulated her demeanour.

All the rest of the Belmont party seemed, with one accord, bewitched by Rosalie; her beauty—her music—the romance with which they invested her, besides that extraordinary charm, which she certainly possessed in a manner hardly to be imagined, and the shrinking, humble, modest demeanour, with which she gratefully—almost reverentially received the kindness that was heaped upon her, was assuredly very beautiful—very attractive. I was curious to see what line of conduct Lady Constance would pursue towards her. She had been absent from London, with the Earl her father, during the fortnight that succeeded Rosalie's debut, and I awaited her return with much anxiety. It chanced that I happened to be present when our heroine was just introduced to her, and to me it was a most interesting sight, divining as I did complete-



ly, the feelings that were passing in both their minds.

The morning after her return from the country, Lady Constance, as was her wont, at an early hour, was in Lady Gertrude's sitting room; Rosalie having obtained a holiday, was passing the whole day at Belmont house; she was at that moment in the nursery with the little Lord Algernon, who was slightly indisposed.

Lady Gertrude, after the first salutations were passed, exclaimed, addressing herself to her friend, "Now, Constance, I will really go and bring that tiresome Rosalie to you. I have a good excuse for drawing her from the nursery, from whence I have not yet been able to move her; that darling little *exigant* Algernon entirely engrosses her; but I shall go and tell her that you want to see her, and then she must come, *bon gre mal gre*."

"Oh pray do not make me disagreeable to her," Constance replied quickly; "don't, Gertrude, make her come against her inclination."

I thought these words were uttered in a tone less soft than usual, but I might be mistaken. However, Gertrude was off like a dart, and when she left the room, Lady Constance was silent; but I saw that she looked nervous and restless—that her eyes wandered to the door, whilst she listened with impatience for every approaching footstep.

I went to the window with the newspaper, and concealed by the hanging drapery of the curtain, I seated myself; but interested as I was in this scene, it may be imagined that I could not help watching the countenance of the fair being who had now, most certainly, a trial to encounter.

How would she meet Rosalie?

If ever her kind, her benevolent heart had cherished feelings of dislike, distrust, and I may almost say envy, these passions, so ungenial to such a mind as hers, had been engendered—not only by the idea, but by the appearance of our poor *cantatrice*. She shrunk from the idea of the nearer contemplation of beauty—of fascination which she felt—and I fear too truly—had eclipsed, and thrown into the shade, her own mild graces. The woman's heart was mortified, her warm affections damped by coldness of manner from the idol of her heart, which she attributed to the more powerful attractions of another; can it be wondered that her very soul recoiled at the idea of finding herself face to face with her rival, forced to hold out to her the hand of friendship? this, she thought, would be worse than hypocrisy; and Constance almost trembled as the door opened, and Lady Gertrude entered, leading the object of her meditations by the hand. For my part, I started with dismay when I looked at Rosalie—so ghastly was her countenance.

But Gertrude, without observing this, led her at once to Lady Constance, saying, "Here, Constance, I have brought you our Rosalie, and I must leave her with you for a few minutes, whilst you make your acquaintance, for I have promised to return to Algernon, who is outrageous at being left;" and as she spoke she placed Rosalie's hand within that of her friend; "you must promise to love her and value her as we do," and so saying she tripped away. Constance, whose eyes had been steadily averted, now, for the first time, looked at the poor girl. Her face, generally so pale, was flushed, her first glance was cold, but it was curious to observe, how, in a moment, her countenance softened, when Rosalie, with that gracefulness which, I believe, belonged solely to herself, (for never, never have I seen anything like it,) bent over the hand of Lady Constance which she pressed to her lips; by this action her countenance was completely concealed, but there was, in the fervent pressure, in the hum-

ble beseeching manner, that which expressed far more than words could have conveyed. It was, at once, an appeal to the generous heart whose kindness it supplanted, and the effect it produced on Constance was instantaneous; she could almost forgive her for being the object of admiration, of such pity—even to Fitz-Ernest.

She raised her, spoke words of kindness, and then the large eyes of Rosalie turned and fixed themselves, with a long and scrutinizing glance, upon the countenance of the noble young lady, which certainly never appeared to more advantage, for its expression was animated by feelings so beautiful in themselves, that they radiated the features from whence they beamed.

Rosalie gazed so long—so intently upon her, that the eyes of Constance sunk abashed; perceiving it, she spoke, and the tones of her voice were low and musical.

"Lady, forgive me, but I have long wished to look upon you, and oh, how satisfied, how thankful I feel, and she raised her eyes in silent gratitude. "You must be aware how much I owe to Lord Fitz-Ernest," this name she pronounced with clearness, and with a degree of firmness I should hardly have expected. "He is about to be married—you little imagine how fervently I have prayed, that she who is to be his bride might be deserving of such a destiny. I have now seen you, I have looked into your countenance, and there I discover the impress of every thing that is good—is excellent, and I am contented, and I may hope that, in future days, long after I am gone, when the recollection of Rosalie has left no other trace, but that of the impression caused by a sad dream, my kind benefactor will be happy, blest in the affections of one noble as himself, gentle and excellent."

Tears rose in the eyes of Lady Constance, but a smile, a gleam of satisfaction, seemed to illumine her countenance with new-born confidence; she placed an arm softly round the waist of Rosalie, and pressed her lips upon her forehead. It was at once the kiss of awakened affection, forgiveness, and gratitude.

It was too much for the overcharged feelings of Rosalie. She disengaged herself from the embrace, and kneeling at the feet of her noble rival, all the agitated emotions of her heart appeared to burst forth—she wept aloud.

At this moment the door opened, and Fitz-Ernest entered. On viewing the scene before him, he stood transfixed—surprised—dismayed. He turned pale as death, as with a bewildered eye he gazed upon the two fair girls.

I saw in a moment what embarrassing consequences would arise from the scene, and coming forward, I hastily said, "Fitz-Ernest, Rosalie has been, for the first time, presented to Lady Constance, and the kind manner in which she received her has much affected her; her nerves and spirits are so very weak, and so easily excited."

A brief, but painful pause succeeded, but in another instant Fitz-Ernest had lifted Rosalie from the position she had taken, and supporting her tenderly in his arms, exclaimed in accents which conveyed to the ear most plainly how much he felt, "Dearest, sweetest Rosalie, why do I find you thus? do not agonize me, by shedding those tears." Too truly did his manner evince the impassioned state of his feelings.

And Lady Constance; I see her now, in my mind's eye; with a heightened colour, she sat, her bosom heaving with the wounded feelings that were throbbing in her breast; and wholly was she disregarded at that moment by her affianced lord.

She saw him press in his arms the beautiful girl

who, she so long imagined, had been her rival in his affections. It seemed, at once, the destruction of every long-cherished hope, the ice-bolt that was to turn her heart to stone; and the roses faded from her cheek, and left her paler than before.

This distressing scene was not of long duration. Only for a short moment did Rosalie's self-possession leave her; for one short moment, alone, did she indulge in felicity, which she knew was not for her to taste; and warmly did she excite my admiration, as well as my surprise, by the extraordinary tact and sensible manner in which she extricated herself from this very embarrassing position. Creditable was it, indeed, to her in every way.

Whether she read in the countenance of Lady Constance what was passing so painfully, in her mind, or, by the quick perception of the female heart, the real state of the case presented itself to her, I know not; but I remember that she looked with a penetrating eye upon the young lady, and then, starting forward, seized her hand, and placing it within that of Fitz-Ernest, who, I fear, but too passively received it, said, in a voice trembling with emotion: "Believe me, this is as I have wished—have prayed—that I might see you; with every hope, with every anticipation of happiness within your grasp. To witness the felicity of those I love is the only joy to which I have ever dared to aspire. Endeavour to obtain for me, Lord Fitz-Ernest, the friendship of that sweet young lady, and you will indeed, have richly added to all I have before received in kindness from you."

These words restored Fitz-Ernest's scattered senses; they were spoken with earnestness, and directed his attention, for the first time, towards Lady Constance; the remembrance of all he owed to her—his situation—his engagement, rushed to his mind; he turned his eyes upon her, and his heart smote him with the pang of self-reproach, when he perceived the air of deep dejection which had spread itself over her countenance; and when she sorrowfully, though mildly, said—"Rosalie, you ask for my friendship, and you shall have it; but I think that you are far richer in friends—in the warm attachment of others—than I, from whom you solicit kindness." There was a sadness, a depth of feeling, in the tone of her voice, which rang reproachfully upon the ear of Fitz-Ernest.

I saw how fearfully his heart was torn by contending emotions—how many varied passions were striving inwardly for the mastery. I felt that it was incumbent upon me to put an immediate end to the scene, and endeavoured, by mingling in the conversation, and imperatively changing it to come to the relief of the agitated trio.

A gloom and restraint, however, hung over us all, and I breathed much more freely, when the entrance of some of the lively young people terminated an interview fraught with so much discomfort to all.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The present position of Rosalie, was undoubtedly in all ways, much in her favour; and even Gabrielli, who, in the first instance had dreaded her intimacy with these great people, began, not only to perceive, but to reap the advantages which were daily arising from it. Her success at the Opera was so unqualified that, at private concerts, her presence was now constantly sought; and no sum that the avaricious Italian could ask, was thought too exorbitant to secure the attendance of such a star. As a master, Gabrielli was more than ever

coveted; for the well-known patronage of this respected and noble family, and the modest deportment, added to the musical perfection of his pupil, very much enhanced his credit in the eyes of the admiring public.

Gabrielli now thought it prudent to remove from his disreputable lodgings, to some in a more conspicuous and eligible situation. This was a source of rejoicing to Rosalie, as the change to the airy cheerful apartments of their new abode, she trusted might improve the health and spirits of her still suffering mother.

This poor woman lingered on with little or no chance of recovery. But there are positions in this world, which very much alleviate the pangs, and lighten the idea of gloom which encompasses the expectation of death. To her the world afforded but few and scanty gleams of sunshine. The present was full of anxiety and misery, and, as she looked towards the future, all seemed dark and cheerless. Self-reproach was one of her sharpest stings; the torture of her disease could scarcely be more insupportable than the agony caused by the self-accusing feeling which ever presented itself to her mind.

However, affliction had performed its blessed work of reformation, and, with heartfelt satisfaction, I found from my almost daily conversations with her, that her sufferings here, were fitting her to quit this world, with her spirit purified and elevated beyond the things of this life.

But it was natural that she should be full of solicitude for her daughter. Had it not been for this one anxious tie, racked, as she was, with torturing pain, totally neglected by her husband, and knowing too well the character of the man in whose power she had placed her child, she would gladly have hailed the moment of her dissolution. But this knowledge made her wish to linger, even in sorrow and anguish; for with shuddering dread she thought of Gabrielli and his sister, who, she knew too well, would not scruple to barter her for gold.

Johnson had alarmed the unfortunate woman by rather incautiously communicating her suspicions, that Sir Francis Somerville's views were encouraged by her husband. Scarcely a day elapsed but some mark of his attention was shown to the family. He was profuse in his civilities and presents to Gabrielli and Myrtille; and towards Rosalie, with more tact and delicacy, he assiduously endeavoured to evince his anxiety to please. Beautiful flowers were daily sent to her, new publications, and once did he presume to offer her a most valuable set of ornaments—but she was peremptory in her refusal—although by it she brought upon herself the undisguised rage of Gabrielli.

The idea of Sir Francis was always assimilated, in her mind, with that of insult and humiliation. What I had hinted to her upon the subject, had made even a deeper impression than I either expected or intended; and much as she was with the Belmont family, there was a feeling which prevented her alluding, in any way, to her acquaintance with the Baronet. As I have often before said, her perceptions were clear and quick-sighted, and she felt that she should be disparaging herself in the eyes of those from whom she so much coveted consideration, should they imagine that, under her present circumstances, she was even acquainted with a man whose character was so little respected by the family.

Her manner towards him, when they met, and that, through the machinations of Gabrielli, frequently occurred, was cold and repulsive, a very great contrast to the *empressment* he evinced to-

wards her, and had Rosalie not been of a most peculiar temperament, and almost, I may say, unnaturally free from vanity, it must have somewhat touched her, to witness the devoted respect, the admiring attention which he would gladly have paid her.

And truly Somerville was completely captivated—entangled in the snare, which he had ever so successfully laid out for others. He was struggling in the chains, and she whom he fain would have made his captive was free, and looked upon him with scorn—with the cold eye of distrust. All his former intrigues had cost him but little trouble; he had only to say he loved, and was but too certain to be loved in return. His good looks—his position in life, and ready flowing wealth, had been like wands of enchantment. But in the present case, strange to say, he saw little chance of success.

This beautiful girl, with all the disadvantages of her situation—an Opera singer—living under the protection of a man who, although he styled himself, by law, her father—was totally devoid of principle, and whose services might be bought.

And then the woman Myrtille! In any other case, her disreputable character might have forwarded his views. But, notwithstanding all these obstacles, the young girl seemed as impenetrable—as inaccessible, as if she had been encircled by a band of fire.

There was a dignity in her own demeanour, which alone would have distanced presumptuous freedom; but added to this, how powerful was the countenance which she received from the Belmont family!

All this was very discouraging; he was disappointed—provoked; but he would not despair. No, the prize was well worth the struggle. Could it be possible, that she would long look coldly upon him? Self-approbation came to his relief. He thought, with confidence, upon his numerous advantages.

Little did Sir Francis reflect, when he thus sought only the fulfilment of his vicious desires, that it was possible he might awake the sleeping thunder, and bring it down from heaven on his unexpected head.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was at a concert given by their Majesties at the palace of St. James, that Sir Francis had an opportunity of again seeing Rosalie. He was standing leaning against a wall, with his arm folded, and his eyes intently fixed upon the beautiful singer.

She was sitting in the midst of a group of other professors. There was a distinguished look pervading her whole bearing which singled her out, in a most extraordinary manner from the rest, and was strangely at variance with her position.

Her dress was, as usual, simple and unostentatious. She interfered very little in its arrangement, she was only scrupulous as to the colour, which was white.

However, to do honour to the illustrious persons before whom she was to appear, her attire consisted of more costly materials than she usually wore. A rich white satin had been chosen for her, but she had no other ornament but the choicest bouquet of flowers—the gift of Arturo.

With flowers she was always most plentifully supplied. Her fondness for them was well known to all those who wished to gratify her, and her friends seemed to vie with each other in their anxiety to indulge this fancy.

But she did not dare to wear any bouquet in public, save that provided for her by the young Italian. She knew that if she were to put his aside for any other, it would go near to break his heart.

Indeed it seemed to be his only remaining pleasure—the only gleam of sunshine that appeared to illuminate for a moment his sad countenance, when he brought the flowers to her door every morning, and sometimes was permitted, with his own hands, to offer them.

He watched her smile when she received his gift—drank in with delight her every word of thanks—her looks of pleasure—then for a moment did his eyes become brilliant—his pale face glow with a shade of colour.

Dear youth! it was very interesting, but sad, to watch that speaking countenance; it told a tale at once of emotions too strong—too overpowering for his peace of mind.

Gabrielli, upon whom the success of all his undertakings produced a degree of good humour, had become less strict in his prohibition of Arturo's visits to Rosalie; and owing also in a great measure to the professional duty which rendered it necessary that they should meet, their interviews now more frequently occurred.

This would have been a real source of pleasure to Rosalie, for truly did she feel a sister's love towards Arturo; but there was in his manner that which somewhat checked the demonstration of half the affection she felt for him. She was obliged to watch, with a cautious eye, to weigh every word, lest she should say too much or too little, so great was his sensitiveness, and so nervous did she feel whilst in his presence.

He was looking dreadfully ill, pale, haggard, his eyes hollow, but with a fierce, suspicious glance, often flashing from them, which it pained me to observe.

Unfortunate young man! His love was becoming stronger, and the more impetuously did it burn as day by day he felt that it became more and more hopeless; and I saw with fear, in his manner, a kind of jealous tenacity, with which he watched Rosalie, his eyes never leaving her, but to fix themselves upon those who presumed to regard her with looks of peculiar interest. I always felt a shuddering misgiving when I ventured to think how all this might terminate; and what strengthened my dread was the circumstance of the great change in his temper and bearing.

He was in no state to endure being reasoned with. If I spoke to him as I used to do, he appeared impatient, and would waive me off, saying, "Leave me, leave me; I am a doomed wretch. Waste not your words, precious as they may be, on me."

Rosalie, who would have done much to serve him, with the tenderest regard to his feelings, would not for the world have hazarded the risk of paining him, by substituting for his offering any of the more splendid flowers which the care of those who wished to please her, so amply provided; and it was with mournful pleasure, which she well knew how to read, that he saw her decorated in these his gifts, a white rose perhaps vieing with the whiteness of her fair bosom.

And oh! it was ecstasy when he saw her inhale the sweet perfume of the blossoms she held in her hand! It was to him, at least, she owed that one gratification; and, to the love-sick boy, this idea, trifling as it was, might claim the name of joy!

On the evening of the concert, Arturo was also included amongst the performers. Indeed, he was generally engaged to sing with Rosalie, as their

voices were never heard to such full perfection as when united. There was something peculiarly taking to the public in their appearance together.

Strange to say, there was a degree of likeness between them. There was a foreign cast in the countenance of Rosalie, her eyes and hair were so dark, they scarcely partook of that style so peculiar to English beauty. They might easily have been taken for brother and sister; and this created a species of stage effect which Gabrielli thought it an advantage to keep up.

Arturo, as usual, took a position as near Rosalie as possible, in order that he might command a view of her countenance, upon the contemplation of which he was luxuriating, with a species of feeling almost amounting to happiness, when, on raising his eyes, by chance they encountered those of Sir Francis, feasting in the same direction.

This sight must have been like a stroke of electricity to the impetuous youth, and Rosalie who perceived the effect it produced upon him, told me that she was greatly alarmed when she saw the frightful expression which convulsed his features. She feared that he would dart forward and commit some terrible act. All that was in her power then to do, was to call him to her, and by talking to him, and soothing him, by praising the flowers, and reverting to the subject of their duet endeavour to alter the course of his ideas. But she dwelt very much upon the terror that his conduct had occasioned her, and asked my advice as to what was best to be done. She said that really fear for what he might do, sometimes made her so nervous that she could scarcely perform her allotted task.

This evening was a very triumphant one to Rosalie, and had her feelings been unmixed she might have left this royal abode, proud and happy.

Most flattering, indeed, was the applause and consideration she received from all.

Immediately on the entrance of the Belmont family, who were the invited guests of their royal host, Lady Gertrude endeavoured to gain, as soon as etiquette would permit, the nearest possible place by the orchestra; and it was not long before she managed to draw Rosalie towards her.

Her performance was never more perfect, for she was at that moment comparatively happy. She had a delightful motive to excite her to excellence. Her reward she saw before her, in the smiles of delight of those she most cared to gratify; and not all the rapture with which her talent was greeted by the numerous and august assembly, no congratulation dwelt upon her ear, save that of the whispered eulogiums of her friends.

However, a distinguished honour awaited her. The very interesting appearance of the young singer, added to the splendour of her voice, had created a vivid impression on the sovereign lady in whose presence she stood.

Lady Belmont was seated by the side of the Queen, and watched with much satisfaction the effect which her protegee had produced.

There was a plaintive expression in Rosalie's voice, which went direct to the hearts of all those who listened to her, and her Majesty was visibly affected by it. Certainly, the pathetic notes poured forth in such rich melody from one so young, so very lovely, much enhanced the beauty of the performance.

When the song was ended, Lady Belmont saw her son Henry, who had been standing near the piano-forte, hanging entranced upon every note of sweetness which fell from her lips, approach Rosalie, and offering her his arm, which she accepted, lead her to a seat where the Ladies de Vere made room for her.

Her Majesty, who was also following with her eyes the movements of our heroine, turned to the Marchioness with rather an air of surprise at the intimacy which she saw existed between her family and the *cantatrice*.

This gave Lady Belmont an opportunity of relating to the Queen every detail concerning Rosalie, and she briefly sketched her story. No heart was ever more alive to generous feelings than that of the gracious sovereign, who kindly listened to the simple history. When it was finished she indicated to Lady Belmont her desire that the young singer might be presented to her.

Lady Belmont instantly obeyed. She felt both pride and pleasure in the office, for she knew how deserving was her young friend of this flattering notice. She at once thought it might have a salutary effect upon the wounded spirits of the susceptible girl.

It may be well imagined that poor Rosalie's heart beat high with nervous trepidation, as she was led forward to such an august presence. Notice from so exalted a quarter must in any way have been flattering, but how much more so, when it came from one whose domestic virtues and strict notions of female propriety were so well known and appreciated amongst her admiring subjects.

Every eye was upon the young girl, as she was thus conspicuously favoured; and I was told by her anxious friends, who watched with painful solicitude, a scene so full of interest, that never had Rosalie appeared more attractive. Although evidently overcome by the unexpected honour, her gracefulness never for a moment forsook her, whilst she received, with humble gratitude, the flattering and kind commendations of the Queen.

There was no servility in her demeanour, her manner was exactly what it ought to have been; and whilst she bent low, to receive the salutation of the gracious lady who thus condescended to address her, it was plain to perceive that her homage came directly from the heart.

Many were the admiring glances directed towards the favoured Rosalie, many a heart was enlisted in her cause. But there was one who witnessed the scene, on whom it made a most powerful change—a complete reaction of feeling.

Sir Francis Somerville's ideas at once seemed to take a very different current, and starting from the almost motionless position in which he had so long remained, his eyes, however, following every movement of Rosalie, he exclaimed inaudibly,—“By all that is sacred—I will marry that girl. That will be the only chance I shall ever have of possessing her,” and as he glanced round the splendid and aristocratic circle, where could he see one who—at least looked—more high bred—more patrician: and where could he find greater beauty—grace—and even dignity. What an appendage she would be to all his splendour; and he felt almost surprised, that the idea had never struck him before.

With these thoughts fresh, though strongly impressed upon his mind, he immediately made his way to that part of the room where the ladies de Vere were standing, almost surrounding Rosalie. He entered directly into conversation with them, occasionally addressing our heroine with the most respectful deference. He never left the party again during the evening, although when he first joined them, he did not feel quite certain that his presence was peculiarly acceptable.

The young ladies accosted him with good breeding, and that ease which their near relationship warranted, but it was evident that they had not been upon terms of great intimacy with him; how-

ever, no one knew how to make use of the arts of fascination more completely than Sir Francis. With the advantage of the handsomest of faces—manners polished and refined—thoroughly versed in all the *bienséances* of the high society in which he lived—he had the power of leading captive, the imagination of all those whom he wished to enthral.

The ladies de Vere remembered having heard their parents mention him in terms of disapprobation; they had a vague idea, that there was something wrong about him, but still, “the voice of the charmer” sounded pleasantly in their ears, the recollection of what they had heard passed away, and the young party at length threw off restraint, and chatted gaily with their cousin; while Rosalie, reassured by their example, soon found herself softening, both in manner and feelings, towards the fascinating Baronet. Her heart, though one of a peculiar nature, was still that of a young and beautiful woman; and though its every avenue was guarded against love, yet it would be unnatural to suppose that she was totally unsusceptible of that most insinuating of feelings—gratified self-approval. Perhaps, this evening, the proud and distinguished notice she had received, fanned into life a spark of this emotion; certain it was, that under the protecting eye of her friends, she allowed—in a degree, the respectful and marked attentions of the admiring Baronet; at least she did not repulse them as she had hitherto done, with that cold demeanour which had so completely daunted and distanced him.

Sir Francis was so charmed, his spirits so raised by this delightful change, that he neither observed, nor had he done so, would he have heeded, the reserved manner of the young Lord Henry, upon whose mind dwelt a most vivid and disagreeable impression of the impertinent conversation commenced by Templeton, in which Rosalie’s name had been handled so disrespectfully. He could scarcely restrain his feelings of anger, as he saw this modest, retiring girl, thus sought by one who had thought of her under the most degrading circumstances. And Henry listened, with a degree of suspicion, to every word that was addressed to her.

Sir Francis had promised to himself, at least the gratification of handing her into the carriage when she was about to depart; but Lord Henry forestalled him, and it was with no very amicable feeling, that he saw his young cousin, whom he had until that very evening regarded merely in the light of a boy, assume the character of a most favoured *cavalier* to the beautiful singer; and he could have gnashed his teeth with impotent rage when he perceived the smile of confiding love which she cast upon “the beardless boy!” whom now—and it was with a pang of disgust that the idea shot across his imagination—he almost considered in the light of a rival; and then did he impatiently scap with jealous eye, the handsome form of this—as he styled him—presumptuous youth. He would have been well satisfied, had he known the nature of the feelings which inclined Rosalie to look upon him as she did, and perhaps Henry might have been mortified, if he could have seen into her heart, and discovered that she loved him fondly—as the dear playmate of her youth—as the naughty, mischievous Henry, now grown good and kind; but it was a love not at all likely to injure the cause of Sir Francis—had she been predisposed to favour it.

However, this last disappointment was very provoking to the spirit of the spoil man of indulgence;

it was in no very amiable frame of mind, that he returned to his home, and as he threw himself upon a sofa, to poulder over the events of the past evening, he felt discomposed and baffled. Even the scheme he had formed, so honourable—so praiseworthy, seemed beset with difficulties.

“How coldly she looked upon me!”—he thought, “when contrasted with her manner towards that absurd, forward puppy of a boy. Upon my word,” he continued, working himself into a rage, “she does give herself airs—cursed airs, and what is she after all, or what would she be, had she not been taken up so injudiciously by those priggish Belmonts. She ought to glory in my attentions. I wish I could divest myself of the impression she has made upon me—I who have all the world before me, from which I can pick and choose. But it’s of no use,” he cried, starting up, and traversing with hasty steps the apartment, “there is a fate in every thing, I truly believe; and until she is mine, strive as I may, I can never shake off the trammels which she has laid upon me. By Jove, it’s extraordinary—incomprehensible; there is something in the light of those large liquid eyes which seems ever to flash upon my mind; by day—by night her image is before me. I am an altered man;—every other pursuit, and pleasure appears to pall upon me;” and in truth, the captivation of his senses had taken so strong a hold on the imagination of Sir Francis, that he felt his future destiny was fixed—irrevocable.

But how to proceed in his plans? This was a question that startled and perplexed him. From the Belmonts he was certain he should meet with no encouragement, for he was aware that he was regarded with little favour by them, and vainly had he sought her at the house of Gabrieli.

It was strange—passing strange—that a girl, so situated, should be so unapproachable, either by fair or foul means. But, so it was; and Sir Francis sighed for some friend in whom he could confide. It was an affair of such delicacy—such importance!

“That fool, Templeton, was useful as a listener, and would have done any thing, dirty or clean, to serve me; but lately, since he has become so *lie* with that Fanny, I am almost afraid to trust him; however, he’s a useful beast, and I have been so long accustomed to him that I feel rather at a loss without him. I sent him off the other day in dudgeon, but I’ll go, and it will not be very difficult to make my peace with him;” and, so saying, although the night was already far spent, the baronet sallied forth; mounting his cab, he soon found himself at Crockford’s, where he felt certain of encountering his faithful toady, and, instinctively directed his steps to the very spot where he knew Augustus would be revelling. There he was, in the smartest of waistcoats, his face redolent with the smiles created by the satisfaction, which the sight of the well-plenished tables afforded him.

He had already eaten a most copious supper, but could not prevail upon himself to take a final leave of all the good things, and was amusing himself by snatching a few farewell pickings. He was just in the act of putting the last plover’s egg that remained in the dish into his mouth, when he received the well-known, but unexpected slap on the back from Sir Francis.

It almost ejected the egg from his mouth, but too charmed was he to receive it, for, from his knowledge of his patron’s ways, he knew that it indicated, as plainly as words could have expressed, that he was in a good humour with him again, and Templeton was in an ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER XL.

My recollection of many events concerned with my Rosalie's history, and the order in which they occurred, has been materially aided by a diary, in which she noted down much of each passing day. It has since come into my possession, and has ever been to me a precious memento of her innate purity. It is the sweetest, most touching document ever placed in the hand of man; and, when memory recalls the moment that it was consigned into my keeping, tears of deep, heart-stirring regret, flow from the old eyes, whose fondest task it is, to trace lines, where a soul so pure, so beautiful, has spoken:

It is one of my earliest lessons, the necessity of recording something of each succeeding day; and I always endeavoured to make her consider, that the twenty-four hours, as they elapsed, were a deposit—a sacred trust from the hands of the Almighty, not to be passed without comment, or to be suffered merely to rest like a vision on the mind.

The poet moralist tells us we “take no note of time but from its loss.” But it should not be thus—the fleeting hours—the actual moment of existence should be marked—and the question asked—is this moment—this hour spent according to the dictates of our conscience? It is a trying question—it is one almost certain of meeting with the neglect observed towards too many of our duties. To obviate this omission—to supply the monitor which a misspent hour, a wasted day calls for, the daily memoranda are excellent and effective. They stand like land-marks in our past pilgrimage, and warn us of the stumblings and the wanderings, which may attend us in our onward course. Poor Rosalie! How ardently did she endeavour to fulfil the lessons of her youth, and how touchingly is my name mentioned, my pardon, as it were invoked, when those intervals have occurred, during the course of her short and troubled life, which she felt as a slight to the instructions of her fond and anxious mentor.

One of these breaks in her journal occurs immediately after her first meeting with Lord Fitz-Ernest at Belmont House. After the lapse of a week she thus recommences:

Saturday, May 3d. “Eight days, and no note made of one thought—one act, one word, heard and approved! Alas! alas! what can I write? There is but one thought burning at my heart, one word; one name alone echoes in my ear; Fitz-Ernest! and there is guilt in that thought; it must be torn from my heart as an unholy thing. He to whom my young affections clung; to whom my every childish hope; my more matured aspirations turned; he, the good; the just; the beautiful, must be avoided; turned coldly from; forgotten. Forgotten! never, never, the plague spot is here; here will it be open when the chill of death creeps over the bosom it destroys.”

This passage was crossed thickly over, as if to erase the written evidence of the love which consumed her. And then, after some days' cessation, her journal thus again continues:

“To you, my more than father, I would offer some palliation of feelings which, although they cannot be justified under present circumstances, surely admit of extenuation. It is my hope, that until the last hour of this sad and wearisome life they may be kept secret; and that in ignorance of the blighted affection which hurries me to an early grave, you will merely attribute to the many trials of my troubled existence, the death which even now seems too tardy to my weary heart. But then you will know all—nor do I wish it otherwise; even now, I would address you on the subject, did I not

fear to pain the benevolent heart which watches so narrowly over all that concerns my happiness. However, these lines will one day meet your eyes; you will then learn that your grateful Rosalie has had but one concealment from her friend; a concealment that was meant rather to soften the asperity of your regret, than to hide her fault. From untoward circumstances, the affections of my nature were all limited; but strengthened by that limitation; you, dear Mr. Leslie, first taught my young heart to throb with that best joy; the love of one's fellow-creatures. From you I learnt to love many others; but oh! none so dearly as one, whose character, even in those young days, seemed to realize all my ideas of fabled and imaginary perfection. What a tender worship rises from the youthful soul towards those whose kindness calls forth its affections; whose excellence commands its esteem! It was thus even as a child; a once forgotten and neglected child, I learnt to idolize Fitz-Ernest.

“It was strange, that even at this period, when my love for you, dear Mr. Leslie, and for all the Belmont family, formed the one unvarying theme of all the babblings of my happy heart, the sentiments inspired by that noble, that surpassing being, should be kept unrevealed in my bosom, felt, unspoken of, known, but scarcely thought upon, without timidity, and a sensation of awe, and shrinking. You, my friend, dropped the seeds of taste, and refinement into my mind; both taught me to love Fitz-Ernest; you gave me acute perceptions—enlightened aspirations; the result was the better understanding of all his excellence. Such was the early stage of this fair dream of love; it became modulated, but unchanged, by passing events. And when torn from all I loved, enduring the rude intercourse of professional life—the rough reproof of vulgar tyranny—the insolence of authorized profligacy—then, even then, this sentiment, perhaps it may be called, this passion, was to me the loadstone of hope, the panoply which shielded my heart from feeling as bitterly as I should have otherwise done, the accumulated evils surrounding me. It bore my soul above the misfortune which, but for that, must have been insupportable. But think not that it was by happiness the shafts of misery were blunted. It was not so, living as it were, in another sphere, withdrawing in thought from the circle where I was only the speculation of avarice, not an object of affection, desolate and unconnected, I existed but for a sentiment which was even then consuming me; and flying back in memory, to pass days of happiness, I experienced with every possible aggravation, that of which Dante so eloquently speaks,—

‘—————nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.’

“Alas! for the poor ill-fated Rosalie! There was still greater misery in store. I came to England, all the enthusiastic picturings of a fond, an ardent heart were realized. Fitz-Ernest was worthy the idolatry which made every feeling of my soul his own. And—and oh! merciful power which teaches us to bear without repining the ills of earth and mortality, forgive the despair which has given the last wound to my tortured heart—I have seen her, seen the happy, the lovely one, whose sole duty henceforth is to love, to cherish him, whom only to see without self-reproach, would form a world of happiness; now all is closed. She is worthy of him; he will love—adore her; they may, they must be happy. I pray for it, I—oh death, acceptable is thy sentence, to him whose strength fails him—to him that despaireth!”

"Yes, yes, whether looked at, with the bright and fancy-tinged glance of enthusiastic and smiling hope, or with the calm blessed faith of the Christian, death must seem a friend, who, amidst the anguish of earthly sufferings, hovers near to snatch us to its friendly bosom, when the pressure of life is no longer supportable, when existence becomes too heavy a burden for the wretch whose last faint hope has set in dark despair.

"Death is the crown of life;
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live, would not be life;
Were death denied, e'en fools would wish to die.
Death wounds to cure, we fall, we rise, we reign!
Spring from our fetters, fasten in the skies,
Where blooming Eden withers in our sight;
Death gives us more than was in Eden lost.
This king of terror is the prince of peace.
When shall I die to vanity, pain, death?
When shall I die? *when shall I live for ever?*"

After this entry in her journal, there is again a cessation for some days; and it is then resumed with a calmness—a degree of rational reflection, which showed how great had been the struggle within. The events of each day were all noted down—all to whom she had spoken—all she had seen; the names of Fitz-Ernest, and his *fiancée* appearing amongst the rest. There was in her words, so much purity of heart, with the glow of imagination—so much sweetness and dignity of idea, with the one deep feeling which imperceptibly to the poor heart-stricken girl, peeped forth in many passages, that I now linger with a pleased, though poignant sorrow, over these revealings of her gentle nature. "Oh! rose of May—oh! flower too soon faded!"

Her beauty and external graces were at that time receiving the most fervent homage, from a crowded and refined metropolis—and even then there were lines expressing such winning modesty—such an humble opinion of her own merits—such indifference to the suffrage of admiring crowds, with so deep a sensibility to the affection of the Belmont family; that I marvel at the thousand perfections of this young creature, who combined in her own person, all the matured talents of an Armida—a Corinna, with the simplicity—the single-heartedness—the purity of a Pamela.

There was one thing peculiar in the journal of Rosalie; the evident interest taken in Lady Constance Delaval, and that too while her own feelings for her affianced husband were sinking her very soul in sadness and despair. She elaborately dwelt on every virtue—every charm of the noble lady. Every disposition of her nature, which the loving tact of Rosalie taught her was of a kind to be grateful to the heart of Fitz-Ernest, was hailed with a pensive gladness. And there were words which, while they betrayed her own consciousness of the power she might herself possess, had fate placed her in the same grade of society with the young lord, of forming and ensuring his every earthly happiness—showed also that she had made a virtual resignation of every hope—a high-minded resolve of burying, in the very depths of her aching heart, a feeling which the instinct of love told her, need only be unveiled to call forth the manifestations of the most fervent attachment from Fitz-Ernest. But the journal of Rosalie was not wanting to convince me of the personal virtue—the intellectual purity, with which she shrank from all that might fan that devouring flame, which seemed on the point of bursting forth, in devastating ardour, from the bosom of Fitz-Ernest. Before its pages met

my eyes, her every action convinced me, that she left no means untried to lead his fealty back to the gentle being from whom it seemed but too disposed to wander—to check the least evidence of sensibility or emotion which she herself might have called forth.

Even her affection for the little Algernon—his own pet brother, was dissembled in his presence. Her distaste for the life of publicity and—as she conceived—degradation that she was leading, was never touched upon. Before Fitz-Ernest, she spoke of it as a thing of course, that one in lowly circumstances should labour for her bread; and when any eulogium was uttered—any compliment passed on the enchantments her perfect acting—her syren voice threw over the minds of her auditors, she would faintly smile, saying—were all as well acquainted as she was with the tricks of the Italian *Conservatoire*, they would learn, that, what appeared genius was purely study, and as it were, mechanical.

Rosalie was, in this instance, insincere; and for the laudable purpose of depreciating talents which, she felt, placed her in too seductive a light, both to Fitz-Ernest and the impetuous Henry, did flagrant injustice to her surpassing and native genius. My firm belief will ever be, that the extraordinary powers of harmony, with which she was gifted, were by no means unknown or unappreciated by her, and that, had she been placed in a different sphere of life, her vocal talent would have been to her one affording most exquisite and unalloyed delight.

Brought by this talent into scenes and society, from which her whole being shrank, it might have been thought that the exercise of so fatal a power was repugnant to her feelings. But it was not thus. There was in her nature—what one could almost fancy *le besoin de chanter*; and from that gush of melody from her youthful lips, which first drew my attention to her at the white cottage, to those exquisite torrents of execution and pathos, which used to thrill to the very soul all that dense crowd which the lovely cantatrice drew nightly to the Opera, I have always observed there was an expression of enjoyment—of seraphic contentment in her countenance, which told her that her poor, bruised heart, at least in this gift of her exquisite talent, had gratification and delight.

At private concerts, her beautiful and eloquent features were always more marked with this irradiation than when she sang on the Opera stage. The contact with mockery and scenic effects, grated harshly on the fine simplicity of her feelings; but in the concert-room, surrounded only by select society, meeting the urbanity with which talent is usually cherished, in this country, her heart, as it were, expanded, and she forgot, for the moment, that she was the hired amusement of the evening; forgot that the brilliant scene, in which she moved, was, in a few short hours, to be succeeded by the discomforts of a home where profligacy, vulgarity, and tyranny combined to wound the gentle bosom, whose only refuge there was in the apartment of her suffering mother.

At the concert at St. James's, perhaps, Rosalie tasted more the pleasure offered by a brilliant and august assembly, the interchange of kind words with kind friends, the approbation her splendid powers called forth, than she had ever done before. Her notice of this evening, in her diary, confirms this idea; and, in the gleam of light-heartedness which her description betrays; and her mention of Sir Francis Somerville!

"In spite of the half warning, half injunction of my dear Mr. Leslie, on the subject of Sir Francis

Somerville, I am still sensible of an infant prejudice in his favour. It marked the first period of our acquaintance, and would surely ripen into maturity, did I not momentarily dread the betrayal of some failing, some error which must exist; or surely one so just, so charitable as my kind friend, would not have spoken of him harshly, and with strict, though vague censure. He may have failings; who has not? but I must believe they are of that description which should meet with indulgence; because they can neither originate in narrow principles or an ungenerous mind.

"Early initiated into some of the pleasures of refined and elegant intercourse, I am vain enough to believe that it has taught me to distinguish the intelligent, the high-minded from amidst the ignorance, the rapidity, the self-sufficiency of those mechanical beings who form, I am induced to believe, the majority of society.

"This power of discrimination is not wholly a gift to be prized. It divests half those I meet of the attractive gloss they bear in society, and detects, too frequently, the pebble where one would hope to find the diamond. But it is not thus with Sir Francis Somerville. Interesting, without the affectation of sentiment; instructive in matters of science and *virtu*, without the ostentatious display of superior acquirement; frank and lively in his manners, without the roughness which would repulse, the levity which might bid one shrink; he unites in his person the charm of high breeding, with warmth and apparent kindness of heart.

"Mr. Leslie surely must have looked with an eye of prejudice on one so formed to claim his suffrage; I must talk with this dear, kind friend, whose affections make him suspicious of all who approach me. And yet, after all, am I certain the pleasure I feel in his society and attention does not proceed from his consanguinity with one whom he resembles, but to whom he is still as far inferior in radiance and attraction as the halo of the moon it surrounds!

"Ah! yes, it may be so. It is not the amiable, enlightened man I see, but the cousin of Fitz-Ernest. How near to him in kindred! how like in tone of voice, in figure!

"How completely, too, he appreciates all the excellence, all the superiority of the Belmont family; and since he has found that I can enter into the feelings of affection which appears to influence him, how eloquently he discusses all the different merits and attractions of each member of that dear circle. This too with a warmth, an animation which, though I can scarcely be ignorant that the subject is chosen, in a measure, from the *desir de plaire* which actuates the man of the world, still shows his heart participates in the warmth of his expression."

Poor, poor Rosalie! while thus portraying with naivete her detection of the refined coquetry of the baronet, which enabled him thus to discover the one deep interest of her heart, and to make it a means of attraction, how completely does she betray the seductive powers of a being who, Proteus-like, could assume any form to gain his purpose. I think these are the last lines in which any thing of satisfaction, unconnected with the idea of death, appears in the diary of Rosalie. And, in their calmness, the *sang-froid* with which she relates the particulars of that evening, the notice of the queen, the public condescension of the Belmont family, how different is it to that burst of eloquence with which she describes the transport of her feelings on recognizing Fitz-Ernest the night of her first appearance at the Opera.

Poor, tender Rosalie! I will not betray those outpourings of thine ardent heart; but, on learning

from them how fervent the love, the devotion which destroyed thee, may we not dwell with admiration on that forbearance, I may say, that magnanimity which bade thee bury in thy breast a secret, whose discovery might have acted so fatally for the happiness of those dear to thee! She thus concludes the passage in her journal.

"Thus it is true from the sad years of life
We sometimes do short hours—yea minutes strike,
Keen, blissful, bright, never to be forgotten;
Which through the dreary gloom of time o'erpast
Shine like fair sunny spots on a wild waste.
But few they are."

A passage in this interesting diary instructed me of a circumstance of which I had before been ignorant, and that was the preliminaries of an engagement for Rosalie with the manager of the Italian Opera at Paris.

It seems she resisted this at first; her very soul sickening at the idea of leading her present life of trial and publicity, in a corrupt and depraved city, unsustained by one of the circumstances, which alone made her present griefs supportable. It interfered too with one of her most secret, yet ardently desired plans for the future.

It appeared that her mind was directed to, and and rested on, the strange hope of dying at Fairbourne. She believed she had strength to sustain her present engagement, and buoyed herself up with the vain expectation that Gabrielli would content himself with her London season, and suffer her to rest in retirement until the period of her resuming her place on the Opera stage: she dwelt fondly on the idea of some months' quiet, and then sinking into her grave beneath the old yew tree, before she was again called to the hateful *metier*, which the avaricious craving of her tyrant father-in-law had chalked out for her.

Seeing her agonising apprehensions of an engagement with the Parisian *Directeur*, I could gather from her words, that Gabrielli had rather waived the matter, fearing the results of agitation on a frame evidently becoming more fragile each succeeding week.

This temporising had rather soothed the chafed spirit of the unhappy girl, but still there was a deeper tone of despondency visible in the succeeding pages of her journal.

The incident had shown her that a protracted life could produce no joy—no melioration of her sad condition. Like the wretched galianer, she was linked by galling chains to the labour from which her heart revolted. There was no one ray of hope to brighten the dreary perspective before her; can we wonder, then that, like the poor captive at the oar, she looked to death alone as the blessed power which should emancipate her.

But even here there was disquietude. Taught by her own pure reason—by holy lessons of former days, to feel that death was not alone to be looked to as the liberator from earthly misery; nor to be met with a heart clinging to earthly objects, beating with the fervour of earthly feelings; she was aware there was still much left for her to do ere she could experience within her the purified spirit which could alone render her meet for the blessed rest she sought. How exquisitely her plaints are poured forth in the lines I transcribe. Who can read, and not weep with the fainting heart which dictated them?—

"Hear, Father! hear and aid!
If I have loved too well—if I have shed,
In my vain fondness, o'er a mortal head,

Gifts, on thy shrine, my God, more fitly laid;
 If I have sought to live,
 But in one light, and made a mortal eye
 The lonely star of my idolatry,
 Thou, that art love! oh! pity, and forgive me!
 Chasten'd, and schooled, at last,
 No more, no more, my struggling spirit burns,
 But, fixed on Thee, from that vain worship turns.
 What have I said?—the deep dream is not past:
 Yet, hear!—if *still* I love,
 Oh! still too fondly—if, for ever seen,
 An earthly image comes my soul between
 And thy calm glory! Father! throned above;
 If still a voice is near,
 (Even while I strive these wanderings to control,)
 An earthly voice, disquieting my soul
 With its deep music, too intensely dear;
 Oh, Father! draw to Thee
 My lost affections back! The dreaming eyes
 Clear from their mist; sustain the heart that dies;
 Give the worn soul, once more, its pinions free!
 I must love on!—Oh, God!
 This bosom *must* love on! but, let thy breath
 Touch, and make pure, the flame that knows not
 death;
 Bearing it up to heaven, love's own abode!"

Thus spoke—thus prayed my poor suffering child—but I fear the feeling which she besought might be banished from her bosom caused the last sigh—the last flutter of the warm, affectionate heart of Rosalie.

To borrow the eloquent expressions of a talented poetess, when thinking of Fitz-Ernest and the beautiful *cantatrice*, how truly can I say—

"Man
 Loves on, till hope be dead, then love dies too;
 'Tis only woman lays her silly heart
 In hope's cold urn, and, in that funeral nest,
 Broods o'er her love."

CHAPTER XLI.

This was a very anxious period of my existence. I never awoke in the morning without a sensation of weight and discomfort upon my spirits. Through all the course of my long life, I had lived so entirely for others—human nature had been to me such a complete study—that I had learned to read, in a very peculiar manner, what was passing in the minds of others.

To a casual observer, every thing might have appeared to be going on prosperously at that present moment. My especial care and *protegee*, was pursuing a career of uninterrupted, and almost unprecedented success.

Nothing could exceed the sensation she created; it amounted to a complete *furor*, and many may well remember the intensity of interest her brief and brilliant appearance excited. The notice, so liberally bestowed upon her by Majesty itself, not a little exalted her in the eyes of the admiring world; but all must have been unanimous in allowing that her own merits required no other aid to enhance her perfections; and, perhaps, none that she possessed was more attractive than that innate modesty of deportment which cast, as it were, a veil over her, and appeared to chasten, although it concealed not any of its loveliness.

Even in these days of her triumph, I often looked at her with uncertain pleasure. "Is not this all too bright to last?" I thought, as I saw her now, in so altered a mood. She was very different from

what she had been; then she was ever sad, dejected, but gentleness itself.

It seemed to me unnatural, the sort of wild gaiety and excitability which she evinced in her present state of spirits. She appeared as if she were always endeavouring to wind herself up. The glance of her eye was bright, but restless, and her cheeks were almost always flushed; I observed, too, that she was thinner than ever, and coughed frequently.

Poor Rosalie! Could her inmost thoughts, at this period, have been fathomed, one might have found, that in the midst of the smiling scenes before her, there was one small spot of desolation, on which her eye continually rested; and which turned all the rest of the cheerful landscape to gloom.

The struggles she made—the energy with which she combated the sole absorbing feeling of her heart, which she so long had nurtured and cherished, as her only treasure, was, indeed, a noble and most beautiful proof of her strict sense of what was right.

But there are some frames not calculated by nature to endure, without injury, such violent efforts. By thus struggling, although her mind was unconquered, her vital energies were undermined.

Her strong principle—her sense of what was due to herself and to her noble friends—made her feel that she would rather die than allow one vestige of a sentiment to remain, which her reason pointed out as not only hopeless, but also partook of guiltiness to encourage.

This victory over herself was, indeed, dearly bought; her heart, alone, knew the torture she did not spare to inflict; and, with her own hands, fain would she have torn out the shaft that had so deeply wounded her, although, by this act, she knew that it would leave that heart desolate, bleeding, almost lifeless.

But Rosalie was not the only one in whom I could read a tale of inward suffering: indeed, it appeared to me, that there were many of my young friends who were under the influence of depression of spirits, though each endeavoured to act a part in order to conceal it. But their smiles were like the deceitful gleams of radiance which are oftentimes the precursors of a storm—a dazzling flash of brightness, soon to be obscured by tears.

I saw that Fitz-Ernest evidently endeavoured to avoid meeting Rosalie at Belmont House; at this I should have much rejoiced, and was about to give my young friend, in my own mind, the highest praise for this self-denying conduct; but, I discovered, to my sorrow, that he took every other opportunity of, at least, satiating his eyes, by gazing upon her.

He never missed an Opera; and I found that no rehearsal took place without his being there. He fancied that his presence was unobserved; and the secrecy with which his actions were conducted, convinced me more than ever of the great foundation I had for my fears.

Deeply did I feel for the conflict which I knew was raging in his mind; and, gladly, would I have had him relieve his overcharged feelings, by confiding to me his perplexities. Then, I would have advised—would have besought him to fly from the present danger—to endeavour, by absence from the fascinating influence which now enthralled him, to seek for that peace which his present course was destroying.

"But it was not so to be. I dared not intrude my advice at that moment. I saw that it was not the time to interfere. How true it is, that when the disorders of the mind arrive at their height, they are, of all miseries, the most difficult to endure!

Fitz-Ernest knew too well that his conduct was weak—inconsistent, to use the mildest terms in designating it; but he had not the energy to cast off the darling passion; he rather pressed it to his heart; he yielded to the impulse, merely because he would not resist it. Reason remonstrated—conscience endeavoured to check him, but all in vain.

Many a time have I seen him, when he fancied himself unperceived, looking upon our unconscious heroine, with such profound love and admiration, that whilst at the same time, I condemned—I pitied him; for there was so despairing an expression in his countenance, that it made my heart sink within me, and I was dreadfully puzzled how to act.

Ought I not at once to acquaint Lord and Lady Belmont with my fears? I temporized the matter. Perhaps this was blameable, but I felt it would be such a complete annihilation to all Rosalie's present comfort, that I could not bring myself to do what I knew would destroy the apparent calm that she was enjoying.

And Lady Constance—I could not fail to be anxious on her account. I thought she looked pale and ill; but I heard nothing to give me any idea that the marriage was not still *en train*. Her conduct was very delightful towards Rosalie. It was evident that she, in common with others, was much attracted by her, and the notice she bestowed upon her, appeared to me extraordinary, and magnanimous, as well as the attention and kindness she evinced in every way. Why was all this?—It is difficult to fathom the mystery of a woman's heart.

I have seen her, with her eyes fixed upon her beautiful rival, with an expression which went to my heart; it said as plainly as words could have done, "No wonder he admires her, and sees at once her great superiority to myself."

But this feeling did not seem to produce in her the effect it might had done on others. There was none of the wormwood of jealousy mingled, only gentle sorrow, which exhibited itself in the tearful eye, and the mournful cast of her countenance.

But there was a charm in her gentleness, and in the noble conduct she pursued, which wrought much more beneficial effects to herself and others, than had she given way to impatience, or what might have almost been deemed natural under her circumstances—evinced dislike, and unwillingness to cultivate the acquaintance of Rosalie.

It created a feeling in Rosalie's heart which almost amounted to enthusiasm. Her own exalted mind at once was enlisted warmly and devotedly, to this kindred soul of excellence; her gratitude became extreme, her admiration unbounded; and these sentiments soothed and consoled her, and gave a bias to her ideas, which was most healthy and supporting.

She had now a motive for relinquishing her cherished feeling, and when she remembered in whose favour she resigned it, she hoped, and fervently prayed, that she might in time, tutor her heart to beat with calmer emotions. For would there not be happiness in store for *him*? and for herself—such an idea as happiness had never entered into her calculation.

Should she live to see Fitz-Ernest united to Constance, then would every thing for her in this world be ended. Her presumptuous thoughts, her hopes, her fears, must then be hushed for ever, and her next idea was, that it might please Heaven that she should die.

Indeed, in this last feeling she had long indulged. The hope of an early death seemed to bound her every view for the future, and by continually dwell-

ling on the theme, her mind did become heavenly, much more fit for that world of purity, than this mortal chequered state.

It always appeared to me, that she walked through this world without belonging to it. She was like no other being I ever met. 'Tis not my exaggerating love that thus surrounds my sweet heroine with so many perfections. There are many who saw her, who will support me in all that I say, and will confess that the picture is not overdrawn; and even those who did not know her intimately, must dwell upon the remembrance of the fair girl with a degree of mournful admiration. Her appearance in the world might be likened to that of a brilliant meteor, too dazzling, too beautiful to last.

CHAPTER XLII.

I must retrace my steps, and return to the day which followed Rosalie's gratifying success, at the concert given by their Majesties.

I had heard all the agreeable details from Lord Henry, who paid me an early visit, and when I shortly afterwards repaired to Rosalie's abode, I expected, and hoped, to find her in excellent spirits; but to my disappointment, I saw that she had been weeping.

Grieved and alarmed, I questioned her as to the cause of her dejection, and she told me that her present discomfiture arose from the agitation, which a brief visit from Arturo had occasioned.

She said she was busy writing, when she heard the door slowly open, and some one enter. She lifted up her eyes, and beheld the Italian. "And immediately," she added, "a panic seized my whole frame, for as he approached, his countenance shocked me inexpressibly. He held a bouquet as usual in his hand, and looked as pale as death; but that was nothing to the expression of his eyes. I cannot describe it," and she shuddered as she spoke, and placed her hands before her face, as if to shut out the view of some dreadful object. "Arturo," I exclaimed, "what ails you?" but he did not answer; he stood silently looking at me for a moment, and then dashing the flowers upon the table, he rushed from the room. "Dear Mr. Leslie," she continued, "I am terrified, when I think of that dark, dreadful glance; and that one, who is really so good, so noble, should at the same time have such evil passions in his heart. I know well, at least, I much fear, from whence they spring, poor youth, and God knows, I deeply lament, I feel for him," and she sighed deeply; "all this unfortunately proceeds from the love he cherishes for me. But in what an extraordinary manner it affects him! To me it is past comprehension. How I trembled last night, when I caught an expression of his countenance, during the time I was speaking to Sir Francis Somerville. For Heaven's sake, my dear sir, suggest something that will calm his mind. Cannot you talk to him—endeavour to admonish him—to make him listen to reason."

"My dear child," I replied, "I know not what line to pursue. Arturo shuns me, will not allow me an opportunity of speaking to him. He appears almost to have taken a dislike to me."

However, I saw that Rosalie looked so annoyed—so unhappy, that I promised to seek him, and try whether I could produce any effect upon him. But my mind misgave me as to being of any use.

His unfortunate love for Rosalie burnt, in his nature, with a fierce and unquenchable fire. All the softness which had mingled in his disposition seem-

ed scorched and withered. Nothing appeared to be left but dark revenge, and torturing despair.

I found that Rosalie was in no mood to talk upon any other subject. She said she could not feel happy, or reflect with pleasure upon any circumstance, whilst poor Arturo was so wretched; and she besought me to lose no time in going to him.

I therefore, repaired to his lodgings, but after I had made my way to the top of the house, I found the door of his apartment locked. I knocked repeatedly, but receiving no answer was about to depart, mortified at the failure of my mission, when another door on the same landing-place opened, and a man approached me.

I saw at once, by his appearance that he was an Italian, and in that language he politely addressed me, asking me if I was not seeking the Signor Vivaldi. I immediately guessed that he was the person, of whom I had heard Arturo speak in terms of friendship.

He was an elderly man, and I believe either a musician or actor at the Opera-house. He told me that Arturo was really not at home, and on my asking some questions concerning his health, he shook his head and answered, that in his opinion it was the mind that was diseased.

On my continuing my inquiries, he courteously invited me into his little apartment, which seemed hardly large enough to admit much more than himself and his violoncello; and after some trouble in moving music, from the only decent chair he had to offer, of which he insisted that I should take possession, he began to talk upon the subject of his *compatriote*.

There was a kindliness of manner, and *bonhomie* about this man, which immediately prepossessed me in his favour. I found that his name was Bruno. He had known Arturo from his earliest boyhood, and seemed to take the liveliest interest in his welfare.

"Oh Signor," he said, "I do not know what will become of that poor youth; every day I see him more and more dejected. I fear, indeed, that the origin of his malady is hopeless—his absorbing love for that beautiful cantatrice. My heart bleeds for him. For the last two or three days his mood is strangely altered; he has been wild—ungovernable; fierce passions seem to have taken possession of his breast. As for food, I believe he would never swallow any, did I not take care to provide him with some, and my entreaties to prevail upon him to take some nourishment—but it is a sad sight Signor, to watch the gradual decay of such a youth as Arturo; to see his fine energies deserting him—his temper becoming fierce—his beauty perishing—every prospect blighted—destroyed; and without any hope—any power of being of use;" and here the good Italian looked powerfully affected.

"I have known him from a child," he continued, "and his old uncle, who gave up his pittance to educate him, is now left desolate, by the object of all his hopes; for he has abandoned him to follow an ignis fatuus, which is luring him to destruction. Oh, Signor, you English, calm—even in your temperaments, can faintly estimate the fiery nature of one born under the scorching influence of an Italian sky! Ours are not the measured feelings which beat in your breasts. We are Italians, and feel as such! But hush," he cried suddenly, interrupting himself in the midst of his vehement harangue, "I hear Arturo's step."

We both approached the door which Bruno had opened, and beheld him. He was unlocking his apartment, and his back was turned to us, therefore at first I did not see his countenance; but on his

name being pronounced by Bruno, he suddenly turned his head, and not all that Rosalie had said, prepared me for the painful surprise which his looks occasioned. His bloodshot eyes—his sullen air—so unlike his usual expression!

I really was riveted to the spot, and did not advance; and Arturo, without taking any farther notice of the Italian, immediately entered the room, and we heard him fastening the door inside.

All this was very annoying and perplexing to me, and I was made still more anxious, by Bruno informing me, that he had been out since four o'clock that morning, and that he was certain no nourishment had passed within his lips, during the whole of the day.

"See," he said, pointing to a small table upon which stood some wine and other refreshments, "I have remained here watching all the day, in order that I might make him partaker of what I have provided; and now he has shut the door against me;" and the poor man looked sad and mortified. I went to the door and knocked, telling him that I was there, and requesting him to admit me; but it was not until some time had elapsed, that at last, with seeming reluctance, he acceded to my demand; and I entered, accompanied by Bruno. Arturo turned from me with almost an expression of anger. I believe, had it not been for that habitual respect, with which he ever regarded me, he would have scarcely scrupled to tell me to begone.

But I heeded not his repulsive expression. "Arturo," I said immediately, "I know that you have eaten nothing this day, therefore, before I enter into any farther conversation with you, I do insist that you will, without delay, take what that kind friend has so thoughtfully provided for you;" and I fixed my eyes upon him with grave determination, which I perceived he had not the courage to resist.

Bruno directly left the room, and returned with some bread and wine. After some little hesitation, he was induced to partake of a portion of it, and much did he require support, for he appeared to be in a weak—exhausted state. Had it not been for the excitement of his mind, his frame must have sunk from want of natural nourishment.

When I saw that he looked in a degree refreshed, I made a sign to Bruno to leave us, and then I approached Arturo, who was still sitting moody and abstracted.

Poor fellow! my heart truly felt for him. Taking his hand in mine, I pressed it with kindness and sympathy, which I observed he at once appreciated. "Arturo," I said, "I am come from Rosalie, who is miserable about you."

At the sound of this name, a sort of shudder shook his frame; but he spoke not.

"Tell me in Heaven's name what is the matter," I continued, "and let me endeavour to speak peace to your troubled soul."

I saw that a fierce struggle was taking place in his breast. The power of utterance was denied to him, but his cheek grew pale and red by turns. He extricated his hand from mine—turned his head away; he positively heaved with emotion.

Again I said, "Speak to me Arturo, relieve your mind by confiding your miseries to me, your anxious friend. Fear me not, for I love you well, and though I am old, I have not outlived my sympathy for the sorrows of youth."

But at that moment, how impossible was it for him to answer. The struggling emotions of his heart were almost choking him; and although it was most affecting to behold, still it was a relief to

me, when at length I saw him burst into a passionate flood of tears; and as he wept, dear boy, with almost childish violence, I thanked Heaven for the solace which these timely drops, I felt certain, would afford him; and although again I pressed his now unreluctant hand, I did not strive to check the current of his tears. I knew that they would soften the rigid nature of his present feelings, and that soon he would be able to sooth his mind, by pouring forth his griefs, to one he loved and trusted; and though miserable, he still had this privilege—with full confidence, to impart the secrets of his soul to a friend.

I mentioned Rosalie's name on purpose. I was certain it would be the only means of rousing him. What a theme for moralizing was the youth, as there he sat, drowned in tears. To see a man in all the strength of youth—of health—of power! thus laid low by the overwhelming force of one passion! Of what avail were all his great—estimable qualities? He was now as a thing of nought—useless—enervated—no longer, even reasonable. To witness a noble mind thus shaken, is humiliating, as well as sad; a youth throwing away all the valuable opportunities he once enjoyed—so lost, oh! it was a grievous sight—but what was to be done?

After a time, I again addressed him, "Promise me, dear Arturo," I said, "that you will endeavour to calm the feelings which are now raging with such sinful violence in your heart; enable me to console Rosalie, by telling her that you will not grieve her again—that you will be to her as you have ever yet been—her friend, her kind Arturo, on whom she has always leant for comfort, whose affection, I do assure you, she prizes dearly."

Arturo started up, and seizing both my hands, exclaimed, "Signor, as you hope for salvation, tell me is that true—does she really care for me?"

"She does, Arturo, and your unkindness this morning has hurt her much. From what cause did it proceed?"

I wished to probe his wound, to make him speak out, knowing it would be the only way to serve him effectually.

Arturo's eye again kindled, and the colour mounted to his cheek.

"You ask me why I am miserable?—miserable is not the word to express what I feel. Misery is sad and quiet—not raging—furious like the agony that tortures me. Signor," he said, and he lowered his voice and came close to me, "did you ever love perfection, did your very soul ever idolize a being such as her you have named, and was it ever your wretched fate, to know that such love was hopeless, totally hopeless; that the idol upon whom you would gladly lavish every emotion of the warmest of hearts, entertained no other feeling for you save that of cold indifference; and not only that," he continued, "but worse, far worse," and his voice became louder and his gestures more emphatic. "Was it ever your wretched destiny to behold the beloved of your soul, looked upon by a detested rival, a profligate libertine? Too well I know and understand his designs. He is as base as she is pure, and yet I have seen her smile upon him—listen to his words of insidious poison. But his plans shall not prosper, whilst this hand can guide a dagger. Yes, Signor, an Italian knows how to strike."

The expression of Arturo's countenance, at this moment, was indeed terrific.

"Arturo," I said sternly, "this is very, very dreadful; you almost tempt me to leave you to your fate. Why should I waste my sympathy on one so lost. Were it not for Rosalie's anxiety for you, I would this instant depart. Do you think she

is not perfectly aware of the characters of those who surround her! In society she must meet with admiration. Her talents, her beauty, and her exposed situation, render her open to it; but she is firm in discretion and virtue."

Arturo still wildly shook his head, and the fierceness of his countenance remained unchanged.

"If you cease to be kind to her," I continued, "to regard her with that friendship which, believe me, she has deeply prized, she will feel that there is one being less to whom she can look for consolation under her various trials."

I saw that his features softened and relaxed from their distorted look of anger, and he said in a faltering tone of voice, "Miserable—worthless as I am, can I for a moment hope to be regarded in any such light by her?"

"Arturo, I again positively assure you, that she does truly value your friendship; and to convince her that you are really anxious to please her, return with me to her presence, for she told me she should have no peace of mind until she had looked upon you in a very altered mood. Believe me she loves you with all the affection of a tender sister."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, and the wild expression returned to his eyes, "a sister's love will not satisfy me; it is like throwing one drop of cold water upon a heated iron."

But I continued to persuade him, for I saw that his mood was calmed, and after some little delay, I had the satisfaction of finding myself, with my impetuous young friend by my side, *en route* for the abode of Rosalie.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Belmont family were suffering considerable anxiety. The little boy, Algernon, had been attacked by an infantine fever, which prostrated his feeble frame to the extremity of weakness.

Trouble had not been a frequent guest amongst these my deservedly prosperous friends, and it distressed me to see their clouded countenances. How impossible it is, that perpetual brightness can remain in any quarter without some dark cloud occasionally overcasting it!

When I visited Lady Belmont in her boudoir, where, with the privilege of an old friend, I was always admitted, I found her very low and dejected. Anxiety for her darling child was her paramount grievance; but she told me she had other causes for uneasiness, which, perhaps, struck her more forcibly at this moment, nervously excited as she felt, from want of rest, caused by several nights' watching, at the bedside of the invalid.

She said that Fitz-Ernest made her very anxious. She thought he was looking extremely ill, and so totally unlike himself.

"You know, my dear Sir," the Marchioness continued, "that it has been for some time fixed that his marriage should take place at the end of July. Every thing is arranged; but only yesterday he hinted to me, his wish that the ceremony might be deferred. This has perplexed and annoyed me extremely, for how can I make such a proposal to Lady Constance, and her father. You who have ever been so much in his confidence, and whose opinion he values so highly, cannot you assist me in deterring him from this extraordinary plan? He proposes going abroad till next spring. What can be the motive for such a wild project?" I told her Ladyship how gladly I would assist her, were it in my power, but feeling that I knew too well the

cause of this perplexity, I was very hopeless of being able to effect any improvement, in the present state of affairs.

It appeared to me that there was a gloom pervading every part of Belmont House, and amidst these scenes of magnificence and smiling attributes of joy and happiness, there was still food for moralizing upon the uncertain felicity, which even the abundance of worldly prosperity ensures.

Though the burden is not equally laid on all, where is the individual upon whom the cares of this world will not at some time press? Unexpected disappointments crush the hopes and blast the plans of the most prosperous. The world, perhaps, has smiled upon them hitherto, only to give a sharper feeling of anguish when untoward events shall occur. Could we look into the bosoms of persons, apparently the most highly favoured, even there we might find anxious fears—tormenting suspicions, which level their envied state with that of others. Some secret grief which either they dare not disclose, or which if disclosed, would admit of no relief. In short, amidst that great company of pilgrims who are journeying through life, how few are there who, during that journey, do not meet with many a valley of tears; and sad it is, but too true, that there are those to whom that valley is only cheered by transient glimpses of happiness.

I found Lady Gertrude with a countenance unlike her own smiling happy face. She also seemed full of care, and I soon elicited from her the cause.

Fitz-Ernest's present manner and deportment was grieving her much. She was always confidential with me, and I led her to speak openly on the subject, as I really wished to put myself into possession of the real state in which these perplexing matters stood, that I might know what line to take, for it was time to act in a decisive manner. I was terrified at the idea of what might be the result of all this; particularly as I knew that Rosalie was so deeply implicated in this annoyance.

On my pressing the subject, Lady Gertrude told me that Lady Constance was extremely unhappy. Fitz-Ernest had evidently shunned her society, and so persuaded was she, that he ceased to desire the union, that she was exerting all her fortitude to come to the determination of making the last struggle, which was to release him from his engagement.

"It would have been done long ere this, I am certain," she continued, "had my earnest persuasions not withheld her; but her wounded pride will not long brook this cold neglect; and what distresses me and adds much to the annoyance, is, that poor Constance is perfectly certain that my brother's altered manner towards her arises from his admiration of another; and oh! Mr. Leslie!" she exclaimed, "how it would shock you, if you knew who that other is; the very thought to me is agony, for I feel torn between two friendships. I should not have courage to estrange myself from Rosalie," and here she stopped and looked inquiringly in my face, but I motioned her to proceed, and she continued, "I am sorry to say that even I, who so long have shut my eyes to an idea so fraught with evil, am now obliged to confess, though with reluctance, that Fitz-Ernest is fascinated by her in a manner fatal to the peace of Constance."

I knew not what to say; I felt it was all but too true. Lady Gertrude eagerly pursued the subject. "Not the slightest blame can attach itself to Rosalie, her conduct is beautiful; Constance, who is justice itself, allows it to be so. When she does meet my brother here, she behaves to him just as she ought to do—her manner is faultless. I know

not how to act—how to be consistent—how to be just. But," she added, looking almost indignant, as a flush passed over her features, "I cannot help feeling very angry with Fitz-Ernest. He has disappointed me by thus lowering himself; for is he not breaking faith with one who is suited to him in every way—by birthright—by every excellence that should adorn his wife; what can be his views—his ideas, whilst acting such a faulty part? is it not most cruel towards his affianced bride, and the unfortunate girl, whom he so injures by his infatuation?"

Deeply did I sigh, for how true was every word she uttered!

"Should my father and mother suspect the nature of the case, how sad it would be for Rosalie. How could we expect that they would continue their countenance to one, who, however unintentionally, had been the means of destroying their dearest and nearest hopes. Generous and kind, as they are, for the honour and welfare of their family, they must, from necessity, banish from their presence, one who had proved so dangerous by her captivations, and a source of such deep disappointment to their long cherished plans. I must repeat, that I consider Fitz-Ernest's conduct selfish as well as reprehensible. What would become of the poor girl now, if we were to estrange ourselves from her? But hush," she said, "I hear her voice speaking to Henry; for mercy sake, do not allow her to suspect that she has been the subject of such a painful conversation; as yet, nothing is decided, and still I have hope that the present aspect of affairs may improve; at any rate, fain would I put off the evil day, and not disturb, if possible, the recovered happiness of this dear sweet girl."

Rosalie now entered, looking so unconscious, and with an expression of such modest innocence in her countenance, that I saw it made the same impression on Lady Gertrude as it did on me.

She kindly—tenderly greeted her; there was even more affection in her manner than usual, and I fully appreciated the generous motive which influenced her.

But Rosalie only remained a very few moments with us. She was full of anxiety on Algernon's account, and begged to be allowed to go to him immediately. The little boy was so extremely fond of her, and she had so completely the art of amusing him, that Lady Belmont, at the instigation of the repeated demands he made for his "pretty Rose," had sent a carriage, and an earnest request that she would come to Belmont House.

As soon as she could quit her arduous duties of the day, she lost no time in repairing to the bedside of the sweet child; glad to devote to his service the period she could call her own, before she was again summoned to her professional business. That evening she was to appear in the new Opera, and her time was not at her own disposal.

The charm which her presence seemed to exercise over the little sufferer, was quite extraordinary, and so soothing was the influence of her voice, that the kind girl, though already fatigued by hours of practising, scarcely was allowed for a moment, by the exacting invalid, to cease singing; and Lady Belmont's fond maternal heart, which always inclined with favour towards our heroine, was more than ever touched, as she watched her unwearied goodness to her sick darling. How amiable did she appear to her—how engaging, as she looked upon her, seated by the bed, supporting the child in her arms; soothing him so effectually, and producing, to his irritable little frame, a degree of tranquillity which no other means had yet been able to accomplish.

To those who had witnessed Rosalie's celebrity on the stage—surrounded by all the dazzling accompaniments of a theatre, it was a strange contrast to behold her now, in the subdued light of this shaded apartment; and never, perhaps, did she appear more interesting—more to be admired, than as in the loose drapery of a white wrapping gown, shedding its hue upon the marble whiteness of her complexion, she sat chanting some beautiful Italian air, adapted to simple English words—the spontaneous effusion of the moment, framed to please the baby ear of the young listener, who lay so tranquillized—so placid on her bosom.

How little Lady Belmont guessed the state of Fitz-Ernest's feelings, when he slowly entered her boudoir, which adjoined the sick room! He had come to make inquiries after the health of his little brother. Her eyes were still glistening with the tears of mingled pain and pleasure, which she had derived from the contemplation of the scene she had just witnessed. Without speaking, and motioning him to be silent, his mother gently led him into the next apartment.

What a sight for Fitz-Ernest. His tender parent little knew what fuel she was throwing on the fire that was already devouring him.

The darkened room gave him full liberty to gaze unperceived—to revel in the contemplation of her, for whom he felt so madly, so imprudently.

And there he could have stood for ever, unsatisfied—unwearied, listening to that voice of exquisite melody, the tones of which to him, were, indeed, those of enchantment. And then those eyes, now so soft, so bewitchingly mild, as they fixed themselves with such melting tenderness upon his favoured little brother.

Oh how he envied him at that moment! To be encircled by her arms, to receive those fond caresses, gladly would he have sold his birth-right, ay without a sigh, and all the privileges belonging to it. It was long ere Fitz-Ernest could tear himself away. It was only on the little boy changing his position, and asking for something to drink, that he had courage to move; and when Lady Belmont observed his agitated countenance, absorbed in the one engrossing feeling of anxiety for her sick child, she only attributed the excessive emotion of Fitz-Ernest to the same cause. Far was she from divining the real state of the case.

And what would have been her distress had she known the sufferings her own maternal hand—so gentle—so kind, inflicted upon her elder son. It was through her that the wounds of his heart had bled afresh, and that he left her, with his mind more disturbed—more wretched than before.

CHAPTER XLIV.

This night the opera of *Medea* was to be performed, and Rosalie was to make her appearance, for the first time in that character. She was, therefore, reluctantly obliged to leave the little boy who was becoming every moment more tenacious of her attentions, at an early hour.

The popular feeling in favour of our heroine, insured for the house a most splendid attendance; as was always the case, when she performed, it was literally thronged; and amongst the brilliant circle, before whom she had the honor of appearing, their Majesties had signified their intention of visiting the theatre.

The character of *Medea* was a most laborious and difficult one for so young a beginner, and expectation was at its height.

It had always been a favourite part with Rosalie,

and on her own account she anticipated no difficulties. But with Arturo—it was an arduous task, to induce him to do justice to the character of Jason. He had wholly opposed it. In his present perverted, excited state of temperament, he was a very difficult person to manage; and now in this instance he chose to fancy that he was sinning against her whom he loved, by even in semblance, showing a want of allegiance to her cause.

Could he only portray the character of her slave—her lover, then in what a marvellous manner did he exert his great talents; how did he modulate the tones of his splendid voice; but, to personate her enemy, to love another, to abandon Rosalie!—he could not, would not do it, and he terrified us all by his pertinacious obstinacy.

It would be his ruin, it would be a breach of his engagement, and we were in despair, for his character had much changed lately, he had become headstrong, unmanageable.

At length, however, Rosalie's influence as usual prevailed. She could generally mould him to her wishes, and ever in extremes, now to please her he exerted himself to the utmost, and the professional people were half mad with delight. Nothing ever had been so successful. The last rehearsal was every thing they could wish, and the profound respect which Rosalie's great genius commanded, might have turned a head less strong than hers.

But she heeded not the praise she received; her mind was too absorbed, too preoccupied! I observed lately that the slight cough, to which I believe I have before alluded, had much increased; but whenever I spoke of it she made light of the matter, and always changed the subject as quickly as possible. On questioning her mother and Johnson, however, they terrified me by saying that it had long been a subject of anxiety to them, and that at night it was sometimes incessant. They also mentioned other attendant symptoms which filled me with alarm. But what could be done?

To arrest her steps half way in her brilliant path would, I felt sure, be next to impossible, with such a man to deal with as Gabrieli, for when I mentioned my apprehensions to him, he could scarcely restrain his impatience and anger, declaring that the cough was merely nervous; and that the clearness and flexibility of her voice, and the perfect ease with which she sung, showed plainly that there could be no disease of the chest; he added moodily, that he was certain the way to increase it, was to remark it to her.

With this, I was forced to be satisfied, but I was far from being easy or happy! and every time I heard the dreaded cough, it gave me an inward shudder. It seemed to my ears, like a sound of foreboding evil. But to return to the original subject of the chapter.

All the success with which Rosalie had hitherto met, was unequal to that which crowned her efforts this night, in her new character of *Medea*.—She seemed to attain the very summit of eminence!

The admiration of the audience was mingled with extreme surprise. It was, indeed, scarcely credible, that a girl not yet nineteen, could so completely identify the fierce, the superb *Medea*, a character so full of diversities. How beautiful were her transitions. And at one moment how truly feminine were the feelings she portrayed.

The adoring wife! all a woman's outraged tenderness, was exemplified in every look, in every action. And then the change to jealous rage and fury—her rejected love—how fearfully did she exhibit the influence of these passions. I could hardly believe the reality of my senses.

It could not be my gentle Rosalie transformed

into a blood-thirsty demon. Her bursts of frenzied revenge—of direful jealousy! It was with difficulty that I could bear to look at her—so dreadfully true was her acting—so faithful to the worst part of human nature. My very soul revolted at this spectacle of passion which was now presented, in all its frightful nakedness, to the eye.

But it was a splendid specimen of acting, and the effect it had on the audience was astounding. Mrs. Siddons herself never created a more thrilling sensation than she called forth in the scene with Giasone, when he demands the question, "*Che sperar posso? che mi resta?*" and Medea answers in that one short monosyllable, "*Io!*"

Her attitude—her expression, is not indeed describable; but it elicited from all, one loud simultaneous burst of praise.

To me it was a relief when, in the interview with her children, she relapsed again into her own character—the tender, loving woman. Her pathetic accents—the natural gesture of mournful sorrow, with which she caressed the little victims of her crushed affections, drew tears from my eyes, as well as from those of every person who witnessed this heart-rending scene.

But to me the charm was soon dissipated. The demon of fury seemed again to seize her; again she was the relentless, remorseless Medea; and shuddering I turned away.

When all was over, again were the thundering plaudits heard, and once more the exhausted girl was obliged to come forward, to meet the enraptured acclamations of the audience. It appeared as if the public eye could not be satiated—as if they wished to retard to the last, the moment when the envious curtain should fall, and hide her from their admiring gaze; and it is impossible, but that her young heart must have swelled with triumph—there must have been a feeling of gratified pride—of exultation, which supported her delicate frame, after such fatigue.

But her part was not over; there still remained a trial for her strength, for when the curtain had at last descended, and she was about to retire, Fitz-Ernest suddenly stood before her. I think I have already mentioned that he was one of the Lords in waiting to the King.

He accosted her in a hurried manner, "Rosalie," he said, "I have been commanded to lead you immediately to the Royal box. Their Majesties desire to congratulate you on your success."

Rosalie, who was already very pale, became so much more so, that I thought she would have fainted; but she said, "Is there no escape for me, Lord Fitz-Ernest; must I really go?"

"There is none, dearest Rosalie, and why should you wish it? I would not for the world that you should forego this flattering distinction. To me it is a proud moment. I glory in the office of presenting you to our kind and most gracious King, whose condescending manner will soon disarm you of your fears. And her Majesty is all goodness, and has taken a warm interest in your welfare."—And whilst Fitz-Ernest spoke, his countenance was brighter than it had been for some time. Gently placing her hand under his arm he led her away, with triumph in his air.

When Rosalie found herself in the august presence of her sovereign, her innate sense of what was right, gave an ease and grace to her manner; and the hearty warmth which was mingled in the praise her Majesty bestowed upon her, reassured her, and imparted a vivid delight to her heart.

It was a period upon which she dwelt, as long as she remained in this world, as one of the happiest of her existence.

I had been always astonished at the degree of

self-possession which Rosalie ever evinced. It was strange to witness, combined as it was, with the perfect modesty and humility which pervaded all her actions. It embellished every other perfection, casting a high bred character over her general deportment, like the mounting of a rare jewel adding to its original splendour. She possessed the charm of manner which, in my opinion, ranks superior even to that of beauty.

No one would have supposed that she was so young—so lowly; and in the gorgeous dress of the superb Medea, she looked and moved a queen.—She stood surrounded by some of the first nobles of the land. It was a nervous position for her—but Fitz-Ernest told me that her presence of mind did not forsake her.

Her manner was calm, though profoundly respectful, as led forward by him, she advanced towards the gracious presence.

How his heart swelled with rapture at every word of commendation bestowed upon her by their Majesties. He forgot, for a moment, his perplexities; he existed upon the delight of the present, the exultation of his heart, at seeing her, in whom he took so lively an interest, thus nobly appreciated!

Before Rosalie was suffered to depart, the King had asked from his consort a brilliant ornament of much value, which he presented to the blushing, grateful girl; and as she bent low to receive it, his Majesty, with his usual condescension, put forth his hand, which with all the fervour of her nature, she ventured to press to her lips.

So much favour, publicly displayed towards the young actress, and from such a quarter, spread its influence like electricity, not only amongst the brilliant circle but with every one; and from henceforth there was a fierce rivalry, all striving to surpass each other, in lavishing favours and attentions upon our heroine. Every one seemed now ambitioning a look, a smile, from the hitherto humble candidate for their praise; but Rosalie saw nothing—derived no other gratification, but that which sprung from the unlooked for kindness and condescension of the venerated monarch, and his excellent Queen; and when, at length, she received permission to depart, and again rejoined me, her countenance beamed with radiance.

All her previous fatigue appeared to have vanished; she had been revived by the magic elixir which benevolence has the power to impart. How often will the cordial smile of approbation gladden the humble, and raise the dejected! How often will even the tender look of sympathy impart encouragement to the diffident. How lovely is genuine kindness! From that source flow a thousand advantages, apparently small in themselves, but of the highest importance to the felicity of others; offices that altogether escape the notice of the cold and unfeeling, whose harshness of manner cancels the act, even when they mean to do good. He whose actions flow from the genuine feelings of benevolence, follows the noblest impulse of the heart. He obeys the most amiable dictate of his nature, as the vine produces fruit, and the fountain pours forth its streams.

And certainly there never existed one who more truly exemplified this amiable spirit, than the exalted personage who thought it not degradation to look with kindness upon the lowest of his subjects, and even in his high station, deigned to take part in their joys as well as in their sorrows—truly "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Hence the smallest benefit he conferred, his slightest notice made its indelible impression; for affection, as well as gratitude, was deeply felt.—What an example did he leave to his people! for

such sentiments elevate, refine, and ennoble the mind. But alas! we still continue to estrange ourselves from one another, by unkindness and competitions, when in cordial union we might be so much more blessed, neglecting those better, purer, sources of joy, which flow from the affections of the heart.

CHAPTER XLV.

The idea which Sir Francis had formed, upon the subject of Rosalie was not a mere ebullition of fancy. Unlike the schemes which in such quick succession were created by his changeful mind, this last impression clung with a tenacity to his imagination, which had he felt disposed, he could not have shaken off. But the difficulties which encompassed his gaining access to her presence, seemed daily to increase, in proportion with his impatience to obtain the object for which he panted. Even Gabrielli and his sister, whom he thought he could use as tools for his purpose, were now no longer to be bought. The success of our *cantatrice* so unprecedented, and beyond his most sanguine expectations, so completely raised the respect and consideration of Gabrielli that he had become her obsequious, humble servant.

Her wishes were now sacred to him; and Rosalie having once intimated that she would receive no visitors, this was sufficient; and the Italian availed himself of this pretext to close his door against all intruders. Indeed, his wily mind soon embraced the advantage which such an inclination on the part of Rosalie afforded himself—for the advances of Sir Francis or any other man, would be truly detrimental to his own interests.

At her own home, therefore, Rosalie was unapproachable, and at the Opera I was always at her side, and although very often she was surrounded by a host of men, and Sir Francis was ever of the number, he was unable to gain from her more than the cold unsatisfying courtesy which she bestowed alike on all. There was a marble frigidity in her manner which distanced many.

“Chaste as the icicle

That’s curdled by the frost on purest snow
And hangs on Dian’s temple.”

Certainly there is no passion so wayward as love—so full of inconsistencies, of contradictions, and nothing exemplified it more strongly than this extraordinary feeling of Sir Francis towards the apparently insensible girl. He who had all his life received for every attention he had lavished, a gratified return; he who had been courted, followed, praised—had now to sue, to humble himself, for even a look, a little word, from a lowly girl,—whose only support was her innocence—her purity, which cast around her a magic circle of protection.

The discomfited Baronet was at a loss how to proceed, and deeply did he now regret having so little cultivated any intimacy with such near relations as the Belmonts.

Both Fitz-Ernest and his brother Henry, he evidently saw, were more distant than usual in their demeanour towards him. Lord Henry could never forget the slighting manner, in which he and his despicable toady Templeton had presumed to mention the name of Rosalie; he had related the circumstance to his brother, and we may well imagine how fiercely his heart responded to the feelings of indignation which influenced Lord Henry.

However, to obtain a footing in the Belmont circle was the only means our Baronet could de-

vise to forward his designs upon the present object of his pursuit; which, extraordinary to say, where he was concerned, were really honourable. And now his endeavours were directed towards conciliating the family in every possible manner.

And well did he understand the art of fascination; with his handsome person, his easy high-bred address, it was difficult to withstand the influence of his blandishments, when his whole mind was bent to the purpose of insinuating himself into the good graces of any one. He now sought those assemblies where he might meet the Belmonts—visited their box after the Opera was over—paid gentle and cousin-like attentions to the newly-presented Lady Geraldine, and finally, succeeded in making an improved and pleasing impression on the minds of the ladies. He had heard, by chance, of the illness of the little boy, and, although he was before not even aware of his existence, and, certainly, had no very high-wrought feelings on the occasion, yet, so skilful an adept was he in the fashionable art of humbug, that the solicitude and kindly tone of his voice—his well-acted look of concern whilst he made inquiries after his “little-cousin,”—were so soothing, so flattering to the tender mother, that, in spite of herself, a complacent feeling towards him soon inspired her and communicated itself to her daughters.

They began to wonder why they ever disliked him; and we might, perchance, have heard them discourse on the ill-nature of the world, and how wrong it was to form an opinion of a person upon the word of another. Certainly, as Sir Francis would himself have said, he had done the thing properly.

A dinner engagement soon gave him the much desired *entree* into Belmont House. As it was only a small and very select party, Gabrielli had allowed Rosalie to sing, a favour of which he was very tenacious. Sir Francis managed this interview with the greatest tact and discretion. His attentions to our heroine were not such as to excite any peculiar attention, but, still he contrived to mingle in his address so much of respect—of admiration, combined with deference—that it was impossible that she should not feel gratified; and she could not avoid relaxing in her very restrained manner towards him. Under the protecting roof of her friends she imagined that even in thought she was safe from evil.

Fitz-Ernest was not there, and Lord Henry was also detained by regimental duty—so the coast was clear.

This evening laid the foundation of other visits, and, by degrees, our Baronet had most cleverly worked his way, and established a footing of intimacy which brought him frequently to the house, and into the society of Rosalie; gradually, the icy frigidity of her deportment was melting away; and the more he saw of our heroine amongst his high-bred cousins, so considered, so favoured; and the greater knowledge he gained of her polished mind, her refined and dignified manners, the more he felt convinced that she was fitted, in a most eminent degree, to fill the station which he destined for her.

There was one who observed all this in silence, but with pleasure, mingled with many anxious feelings. Lady Gertrude, alone, perceived the real state of the case, and her heart throbbled with delight and pride.

“If he is only worthy of her,” she thought, “what happiness will it be to see her exalted to a situation in the world which she is so well adapted to fill!” and the partial eyes of her friend overlooked every disadvantage, which her position in life might have suggested to others, in her union with one so far above her in rank and station. She

thought only of her, individually, and dwelt upon her many excellencies—her goodness—her beauty—her talents.

Besides, she reflected that Sir Francis stood alone. He had no anxious father nor mother whose affection might have formed hopes in which ambition had its share; and who might interpose the formidable word "*prudence*." And then again, when she considered the character of Sir Francis, with her own purity of mind, she could think no evil of others—there could be no real vice under such an aspect as his; Rosalie's influence would correct every little foible; the attachment he evinced towards her was a proof, a guarantee, to her innocent perception of his good judgment; and, with all the romance of her young age, she built an airy fabric of future honour and happiness, for her friend, in which her own felicity was deeply involved.

We cannot doubt, but that the youthful sophist combined with these wishes, other hopes; she had another friend in whose welfare she was equally interested. Rosalie's marriage with Sir Francis would be productive of more than one source of importance; and she thought of Fitz-Ernest—that subject which grieved her so bitterly. In short, she dwelt upon the theme till she had fixed it all, and as the dear girl sat ruminating upon this delightful scheme, she smiled with pleasure—with triumph! What a glorious termination would this be, to all the troubles—all the labours of Rosalie!

And, having once decided upon the eligibility of her project, Lady Gertrude determined to give it every assistance in her power.

Henry's regiment was at Windsor, therefore he only occasionally joined his family, and Fitz-Ernest kept so completely aloof from the circle that he was ignorant of the intimate footing which his gay cousin had gained amongst his relatives. Even I knew very little of present proceedings; for a very severe fit of the gout detained me almost a prisoner to my apartments; although I contrived, with some difficulty, never to desert my post at the Opera House.

Lady Gertrude did not communicate her ideas to any one save her intended, whom she created an assistant in her plans of facilitating the visits of the Baronet to Belmont House. Of course, Lord Alandale was all ardour in any cause which was advocated by his fair betrothed; and he was too young, and too much in love, to make any cold calculations as to the prudence or expediency of the event upon which she had, so anxiously, set her mind.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Templeton," said Somerville one morning, "if you have finished spelling over the *Satirist*, I will give you a piece of information which may, perchance, astonish your weak mind."

"What is it, *mon cher*?" he said, yawning and stretching himself; for the luxury of the soft cushions, and the easy structure of the chair in which he had ensconced his fat person, produced a very lethargic feeling, and he had nearly fallen asleep over the paper he held in his hand.

"What will you say, if I tell you I am going to be married, Templeton?"

This speech had the effect of completely arousing the amazed toady. He started up; but it was not with joyful emotion, such a communication was not at all likely to afford him pleasure. Far otherwise. A matrimonial *menage* would entirely des-

troy his present comfort, militate against various conveniences which were to him of the utmost importance.

The *entree* into the house of his patron, which had been the delight and glory of his life! A fine lady at the head of the establishment, and all was over with him. No more snug breakfasts! His eyes almost filled with tears, and a loud sigh heaved from his ponderous chest, when the recollection of the excellent bachelor dinners—the *recherche* suppers, recurred to his imagination—those blissful moments, when, without restraint, he could enjoy every delicacy:—

"Could cut and eat and come again."

Now, in a moment, all his future hopes were destroyed. In his mind's eye he pictured a proud, grand looking Lady Somerville seated at the head of the table, whose cold demeanour, and aristocratic *bon ton*, would actually take away—even his appetite, should he chance to be again invited to the table.

The thought of all that he should have to relinquish did, indeed, give a pang to his heart; and it was with something like a groan that he said:—"Well! I suppose I must congratulate you, although, upon my word, you have taken me deucedly by surprise! You are the very last person I should have suspected of having matrimony in your head, and I would scarcely now believe you did not look so unnaturally grave and positive. But," he continued, "truly, there is nothing certain—nothing indeed!" and his voice became pathetic and sentimental, "excepting, as my old father used to say—death and taxes."

Sir Francis could hardly forbear laughing at the wo-begone manner in which his communication had been received; and knowing pretty well the nature of his friend, he guessed with much accuracy what was passing in his mind.

"Have you the least idea," he said, "who is the fair enslaver, whose charms have been able to draw into such a scrape a bachelor, so established as you ever imagined me to be?"

"Oh!" replied Templeton, looking very wise, "I see the thing at once. I have had my misgivings for some time."

"Now, who is it that your wisdom has fixed upon?" inquired Sir Francis, with some curiosity.

"Oh, of course, one of those stately looking aristocratic cousins of yours. Let me recollect—the one that has just come out. Oh! I have it!—Lady Geraldine de Vere; for, certainly, lately, you have lived with no one else but that haughty exclusive family, much to the surprise of your friends, I can tell you;" and here Templeton assumed quite an offended air.

"No, you are wrong in your guess," replied the Baronet, "and, to save you all farther cogitation, I will tell you at once who it is. I have my own particular reasons for being thus explicit, therefore open your ears and listen. It is my intention to propose to Miss Elton, who is, at present, designated the *Signora Rosalie*."

"Hurrah! hurrah! thank goodness," cried Templeton, starting up, clapping his hands, and actually capering about the room; "so much the better—so much the better; if you are to be married you cannot do better;" for with the quickness of thought the idea suggested itself to his mind, that such a marriage would not militate half so much against his interests as an alliance with a high born equal. He knew little of Rosalie beyond her position as living with the Gabriellis; and he now thought of the matter exactly in the same light as if he were about to present his hand and charming person to the little Fanny.

Sir Francis looked up, and viewed these contortions with astonishment.

"May I ask," he said, "what is the matter? Are you distracted? Upon my honour," he continued, no longer able to resist a smile, "you remind me exactly of a bear learning to dance upon a hot iron; pray sit down, for you quite shake the room and my nerves by this extraordinary manifestation of ecstasy, the cause of which I can in no way comprehend."

"I will soon explain it," Templeton replied. "When you told me, that you were going to take unto yourself a wife, I felt totally flooded;—you know you have always been very kind to me, your house has been open to me morning, noon and night, and you must be aware, my good fellow, that every body is for himself in this world."

"Well," said Sir Francis, "I cannot imagine what that can have to do with the subject."

"I'll speedily let you into the secret. It just came into my head, that if you had chosen one of those fine ladies, she might perchance have turned up her nose at me; for I know I am not quite one of the Almack's dandies—not in that grand dull set, which fashionable ladies consider indispensable to those with whom they associate; and by the by, a stupid cursed slow one it is, in my opinion. However, to stick to the point, it just struck me all of a heap, and thinks I, well, there's no more fun for me here. Now that you've told me you are only going to marry that pretty actress it is quite another thing. Why they're the jolliest little devils in the world. They have not been spoilt by being brought up to think that nobody is worth looking at but those who belong to the peerage; or have lived in the atmosphere of exclusiveness. They take things and people as they come, and live in this world to enjoy its good things without weighing titles and distinctions and manners, and pursing up their mouths, calling one person vulgar, and another genteel, and so on."

Every word that fell from Templeton's silly lips added to the indignation which was rising in the breast of Sir Francis. He was too angry to speak for some time, therefore this long tirade was allowed to proceed without interruption. He felt, in the irritated state of his temper, that had it not been too undignified for a gentleman of his refinement it would have been a satisfaction to hurl the book he held in his hand, at the carrotty head of the unfortunate Augustus, who continued to rub his hands with great glee.

"Well, this is a relief upon my honour. I should not wonder if this was to put me up to marrying Fanny." But Templeton had the sense not to make audible this last idea. Some fortunate instinct whispered that he had better not; and lucky it was for him. Sir Francis was already pale with anger.

The refined—the beautiful Rosalie—aristocratic, at least, in mind—in appearance, to be ranked thus by the contemptible puppy!

"Templeton," he said, in a voice which immediately subdued the raptures of the former, "you are the greatest fool in existence, and not only are you simply a fool, but a most presumptuous—a most impertinent one."

Templeton stopped short, and looked suddenly round, very much like a dog that has received an unexpected kick, and is preparing to sneak away, with his tail between his legs.

"I beg to inform you, Sir," continued the Baronet with an air of cold dignity, more alarming to Templeton than a hearty burst of anger; "that the lady to whom I am about to offer my hand, is generally considered, in every way, save that of rank, equally calculated to inspire respect and consideration, as my cousins, the Ladies de Vere,

whose names you have presumed to use with such freedom; and although she may have appeared on the stage, her position is totally unlike that of those who surround her; if I succeed in my suit and am so fortunate as to persuade her to become my wife, and the mistress of my establishment, there is no Lady de Vere or any other titled woman in the land, who will know better how to choose her society—or whose delicacy of mind and innate sense of what is due to herself, will shrink with more disgust from the vulgar and ill-bred. I sent for you here to mention the circumstance, from motives of my own. I knew it would be the best vehicle I could make use of, for its circulation. I wish it to be known generally. The young lady is the bosom friend and companion of the Ladies de Vere, and in all ways calculated to make me happy. You are at liberty to tell all this in every club, and to every one who will listen to you; and I trust it will put an end to the impertinence and persecution to which Miss Elton is exposed, from the advances of the presumptuous. My eye will be ever on the watch—my ear open to every offensive expression, and we be to the person who presumes to look or speak—by word or deed, either to interfere with my suit, or to lessen the dignity of her virtue by their insolent gossip. Now this is all I have to say, and as I have some business to transact, I shall wish you good morning."

And Sir Francis, in that cool contemptuous manner, which no one knew better how to assume, put out his hand and rang the bell that was close to him, and then opening his book began quietly to read, and poor Templeton looking very silly, walked off.

On the stairs he met the house-steward, who was a great ally of his.

"Jennings," he said in a trembling voice, "we are ruined."

Jennings stared, and on seeing the countenance of Templeton, was really alarmed; and, perhaps, it was hardly a relief to his fears, when on asking for an explanation of these terrific words, Templeton exclaimed in an emphatic tone, "Tis all over, he's going to be married."

CHAPTER XLVII.

It was ever a great trial to the patience of Sir Francis to find himself obliged to relinquish attending the Opera. One evening he had been commanded as a guest to the royal table, and as a state ball was to ensue, he knew that there would be no possibility of getting away, until long after Rosalie had left the theatre. It was a cause of acute regret, and nothing could exceed his mortification; for he felt that it was the only certain means of seeing her, so inaccessible was she always at her own home. He had made himself sufficiently acquainted with her movements, to be aware that she was scarcely ever at Belmont house, on the morning of a performance.

To do the Baronet justice, I believe it may be truly said, that he was sincerely and honourably in love; and this passion, which really in itself is most beautiful—most purifying, had wrought its improving effect upon his mind. All that was gross and sensual in his nature, seemed to be refined. Love that springs from purity of purpose, is ever mingled with respect, and already Sir Francis appeared changed. His old associates—his usual haunts became distasteful to him—all the trivial nothings that before had completely engrossed his mind, had lost their relish. Even to himself this caused surprise, and as he mounted his horse and rode at a rapid pace, avoiding the park, and taking

one of the roads that led out of London, he ruminated on the extraordinary mood that had come over him; and as he went on he allowed his spirited horse to take a brisk trot, and lost in his own reflections, neither saw nor heeded any passing object.

So deeply was he abstracted, that he was not at all aware of being nearly on the point of riding over a man, who was in the act of crossing the road. Indeed the horse's head had touched his shoulder, before the Baronet had the power of reining in his impatient steed. On casting his eyes around to apologize to the person he had thus annoyed, his looks encountered the fierce glare of Arturo, who stood in the midst of the road, holding in one hand a basket containing flowers. The two young men instantly recognised each other. Sir Francis well knew the Italian; and the hatred which was entertained by both, was as mutual as it was bitter. Sir Francis had noted well the looks of rage with which he had ever regarded him. At first the startling suspicion crossed his mind—could he be the favoured lover of Rosalie?

But soon these odious ideas had been chased away, for by his newly acquired intimacy with his cousin Gertrude, who never wearied of the theme, he had contrived to extract every incident in the life of her, in whom he felt so deeply interested; and she had told him of the hopeless passion of the handsome Arturo.

Reassured by this knowledge, Sir Francis in the insolence of his pride, would have treated him with contempt, as if beneath his anger or his thoughts, but in the bearing of the Italian there was something so noble, so commanding, that although he hated him, and, with some cause, still he felt that he dared not take a liberty with him.

Every time Sir Francis appeared behind the scenes, fain would Arturo have sought an opportunity of provoking him to some act, which might bring them in competition with each other; at least if looks that spoke daggers could have had the effect of rousing the slumbering lion.

But Sir Francis was on his guard. First of all his arrogant nature deemed the youth too contemptible for him to notice; and then again, if his choler did rise, he checked the feeling, for he well knew the peculiar sentiments of affection which Rosalie entertained towards the impetuous boy; and so anxious was he to conciliate her, that much would he have tolerated, rather than allow himself to be irritated so far as to commit any act that might forfeit the increased favour which he hoped he had found in her eyes.

At the present juncture we must exculpate the Baronet from an intention of insulting Arturo. He was not even aware that any individual was before him, but to the inflamed mind of his unhappy rival, the act in itself was sufficient to bring to its crisis the explosion of hatred that was ready to burst in his heart; and no sooner did he perceive who was the aggressor, than, with the spring of an infuriated tiger, he caught at the bridle, and endeavoured to seize it.

Somerville warded off his approach, and his hot blood rising to about the same degree of intemperance as his enraged antagonist, he levelled a blow at him with his whip, which took but too sure an aim; and urging on his horse he galloped off, leaving Arturo speechless, immovable, rooted to the ground, almost turned into marble by the stunning effects of this most unfortunate deed.

His countenance was, absolutely, unearthly—every demoniac passion seemed painted upon it.

"Vengeance was in his heart, death in his hand; Blood and revenge were hammering in his head."

The description given by the groom who followed Sir Francis, and who was, afterwards, obliged to give a detailed account of the scene, was very frightful. The inward tortures of the youth were depicted in the terrific distortion of his features. For many moments he stirred not.

At length with an exclamation of horror, he raised his hand to his cheek, upon which the blow of the whip had made a deep impression. Falling on his knees, he clasped his hands together, then lifted them up on high, and his lips were heard to pronounce some emphatic words. After remaining a moment or two in this attitude, he slowly rose, and, drawing his hat over his eyes, walked away with rapid strides.

The man related that the whole affair created such a feeling in his mind, that he could not, in any way, shake off its impression—that it actually haunted him; and, that if he lived a thousand years, he could never get the dreadful looks of the Italian out of his head; and, he added, from that moment his heart misgave him.

Sir Francis rode on, in a towering passion. His blood was boiling with indignation; but it was with a sensation of savage satisfaction, that he reflected on the chastisement, which he had bestowed upon the audacious stripling.

He rode for some hours, and only returned home in time to dress for dinner. He was in no mood to play the courtier that evening. Gladly would he have pleaded illness, or any other cause which might serve as an excuse for his non-attendance; and he had serious thoughts of getting into bed, and sending for Sir Henry Halford, who, from the disturbed state of his pulse, might really, with truth, have pronounced him to be labouring under much excitement of system.

But the remembrance suddenly struck upon his imagination, that he was to meet the Belmonds, and, in another instant, he was dressing with great alacrity. At least, he should hear of Rosalie, and have the privilege of talking of her; and, in the space of a short hour, he was in the full enjoyment of this happiness, having, fortunately, obtained a seat at the dinner table by the side of Lady Gertrude; and, from his conversation with her, amply was he repaid for all the vexations of the day.

Her manner towards him, influenced by the change which her feelings had undergone during the few last weeks, was friendly and confidential. She assisted to draw him on, to speak of the subject that was nearest his heart, so, before they parted this evening, he had poured forth to her the whole story of his love; and so eloquently did he speak, every expression that he used, bore the impress of such honourable feelings—so much of generosity—of disinterestedness, that Gertrude's warm heart was at once captivated, and, with fervency, enlisted in his cause.

Sir Francis well knew how to use the power of speech. It had ever been his favourite maxim:

"That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man, If, with his tongue, he cannot win a woman;"

and, certainly, ere he had accomplished his designs, Gertrude was charmed—elated. If the young Lord Alandale had been there, he might, perchance, have been surprised to watch the glow of delighted animation which spread over the countenance of his lady-love, as she listened, with intense eagerness, to the honeyed words which fell from the lips of the insinuating Baronet. She was, indeed, overjoyed: Sir Francis had spoken directly to her heart. At least, he wore the beautiful semblance of excellence; and, in the unsophisticated innocence of the sweet young lady, she no longer

doubted what she so anxiously desired. And Rosalie, the darling, cherished friend of her earliest youth, would be happy, as she deserved to be;—would be exalted to a sphere for which she was so well fitted, by the elegance and refinement of her mind. The bond of relationship would unite them, if possible, in still closer intimacy. The miseries she now endured would all vanish; and she turned her eyes with—even gratitude—upon her aristocratic-looking cousin.

Never, for a moment, did a doubt cross her mind that he could have any difficulties to encounter; and the affectionate girl returned home, in a state of ecstasy of spirits, which amazed those around her; for she did not communicate to them, the cause she had for exultation.

Sir Francis had requested her, for a few short days, to keep his secret; and to this she had acceded, although she was doing great violence to her feelings, for she longed to spread intelligence which, she hoped, would cause universal satisfaction.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The little boy, Algernon, had rallied considerably from his long and dangerous sickness, and was pronounced almost convalescent; when Rosalie, who had not been able to pay him her accustomed visit the day before, received a note from Lady Belmont, informing her that the child had had a relapse, and was again extremely ill: the Marchioness requested that she would come to Belmont House that day, if possible, as the suffering boy had been asking for her repeatedly.

To Rosalie's great distress, this was not to be accomplished. The whole of the morning was to be devoted to a rehearsal; and Gabrielli, who, in common with others, had begun to be seriously alarmed at her state of health, and increase of cough, was peremptory in his orders, that she should take rest, and not exert her voice in any way until the evening, when she was again to perform at the Opera.

This made her very uncomfortable. She knew the irritable nature of the child; to wait till the morrow would be a complete age of expectation to him, and might bear the semblance of unkindness in her.

But what was she to do? Gabrielli, once firm in his commands, was immovable. She could only write her regrets.

I accompanied her, as usual, to the Opera. *Medea* was again performed, and once more, she covered herself with glory. Well as she had acted hitherto, I could not help imagining that never before did she display such genius; and now, I might liken it to the last expiring flash of an exhausted lamp—startling by its brilliancy and by its sudden extinction. Little did the audience imagine, when again they insisted on her coming forward, that they looked on her for the last time—for the last time had heard that voice—the remembrance of whose melody would never be forgotten. Others might succeed—sparkling and beautiful—but never, never, could there be another Rosalie.

She seldom changed her dress when the Opera was concluded; but merely wrapped herself in a cloak, and, with a veil thrown over her head, returned to her home. I always conveyed her to the lodgings.

This night, as soon as she was seated in the carriage, she said to me—"I have the greatest favour to ask you, Mr. Leslie. Will you leave me at Belmont House? I am so anxious about little Algernon, that I feel certain I shall not close my eyes

this night, if I do not see him. But I will not keep you, for I know you are not well, and are suffering pain from your foot. I will ask the porter to detain the carriage, when it brings Lady Belmont and her daughters home, for I know they were obliged to go to the Queen's ball. Until they arrive, I can sit by the dear little boy. If he is asleep, I shall have the satisfaction of watching his slumbers, and can relieve the wearied nurse; should he be awake and restless, no one can sooth and amuse him as well as I have the power of doing."

I tried to dissuade her from this. I pleaded her own delicate health, and the extreme fatigue she had undergone; but, as this had no effect, I endeavoured to alarm her, by mentioning Gabrielli's anger; but he was engaged to some supper, she knew, and would not return till the morning; and his displeasure she would willingly brave to gain a point upon which she had so anxiously set her mind. As was ever the case, I had not the power to resist her entreaties.

"But your dress, my child," I said; "what an attire for a sick room."

She laughed, and answered—"That will be easily managed. I can soon cast it off, and borrow a dressing gown; therefore not one of your arguments will avail, so let us at once drive to Piccadilly, and indulge my whim with your usual kindness."

So we went there, and having arranged her plans with the porter, I left her, and returned home to nurse my poor agonizing foot, which ought properly never to have left the foot-stool.

Rosalie soon glided up the stairs, and found herself in the boudoir of the Marchioness. There she was told, by an attendant, that the little lord was very restless; the doctor had given him a sleeping draught, which as yet had not composed him, and he had only just left him, saying his patient was not much better.

The nurse was with him, and as Rosalie softly entered the sleeping apartment, her tender heart was pained by the sound of exclamations of suffering and impatience, which were bursting ever and anon from the lips of the sick child. The nurse was in vain trying to quiet him.

Rosalie said in a soft tone, "My poor Algernon, how grieved I am that you are ill again. Rosalie is come to sing to you, to endeavour to make you better, and to ask her little darling to lie still and try to sleep, and then he will soon be well, and his poor mamma will be happier."

The child immediately knew the sweet voice which addressed him, and held out his feverish hand, but looked surprised when he saw her thus enveloped in the large cloak and veil, which so altered her appearance.

She perceived this and said, "I will take off this cloak, Algernon, and then you will see what a beautiful dress I have on; but as I am going to stay with you an hour or two, Mrs. Norris will, I am sure, bring me a dressing gown which I shall put on as soon as you have admired me sufficiently."

On her throwing off the cloak, the little boy looked at her with admiration, and then exclaimed, "But you must not take it off, Algy likes to see it. It makes him think of the good and beautiful fairy you read about the other day, so don't take it off," he again repeated in the petulant tone of sickness.

And Rosalie who would fain have disencumbered herself from the gorgeous dress, so heavy and inconvenient, particularly in her present capacity of nurse, cheerfully acceded to his request; and entreating Mrs. Norris to retire to her bed in the next room, promised to watch by the invalid until the return of the carriage obliged her to relinquish her post.

Too glad was Mrs. Norris to avail herself of this permission. She knew that her lady would be satisfied, and the child even more easily tranquilized than if she remained; so Rosalie was left alone with her charge.

He begged that a light might be so placed that he could look upon his "beautiful fairy," and then desired her to sing, which she did in a low soothing tone of voice, kneeling by his bedside; a position which enabled him to examine more closely the ornaments round her neck. With his eyes wide open, and fixed upon this dazzling object, the little fellow lay quite still for some time, but by degrees the eyes began to close, and though he seemed to wish to keep them open to gaze again and again upon the radiant figure before him, at length the heaviness of sleep prevailed, and the closed eyelids shut her from his sight. Soon his breathing gave indication of calm and refreshing repose, and his watchful friend knowing how long it had been a stranger to his irritable frame, hailed with joy this symptom of amendment.

So fearful was she of disturbing him that, fainting as was the position she had taken, she remained in it, still holding one of his little hands, and continued to sing, lest the sudden cessation of sound might break his slumber.

And what an opportunity was this, of breathing forth the devotion of her heart to the throne of grace! On her knees, in a half-darkened room, by the side of a mortal spirit which looked as if it were hovering between earth and heaven, the life of the adored child of parents so virtuous, so beloved, was hanging, as it were, by the most slender thread. But the hand of the Almighty *could* save it—the power of the Omnipotent surrounded it.—And Rosalie prayed fervently, although her aspirations were poured forth in song.

And what language is more fitted to excite and to express the best feelings of our nature, or more suited to convey the sorrow of the labouring heart? Wrapt in the enthusiasm of adoration—of devotion—which her ideas inspired, she heeded nought besides; neither time as it sped its rapid flight, nor any other consideration, and she continued to chant forth her earnest supplications.

But suddenly her ear caught a sound. She paused and listened, and then a deep-drawn sigh, caused her to cast her eyes towards that part of the room from whence it proceeded, and she saw, standing at the other side of the bed, Lord Fitz-Ernest. He leant against the opposite wall; his arms were folded, and how long he might have been there, she could not guess.

Rosalie's first impulse was to rise suddenly, but the idea of awakening the child checked her, and she remained in the same position; but her face was crimsoned with emotion, and she bent her head upon the coverlet.

A painful pause ensued. At length it was broken by Fitz-Ernest, who said in a hollow, agitated tone, "Rosalie, I must speak to you."

She shook her head, and pointed to the child—but, with an impatient gesture, he exclaimed—"Is he only to be considered? have you no feeling left but for him—when I so much more require the solace which you alone can afford? You must come into the next room, Rosalie, and speak to me—or the alternative will be, that, in another moment, I shall be gone, and you will never see or hear of me more."

Rosalie sickened with terror, not only at his words, but at the expression of his countenance; for, by the shaded light of the lamp, she saw that it was wild and ghastly in the extreme. She gently extricated herself from the child, and hastily approached him.

"What mean these dreadful words?" she exclaimed—"you fill me with terror."

"My meaning is this, Rosalie," he said, and at the same moment, he caught her in his arms, and pressed her convulsively to his heart; "shrink not with such terror—I mean no wrong. I am here to ask you to decide my fate. I adore you—I feel that I cannot exist without you!—promise to be mine—my wedded wife—the beloved partner of my future existence—and then what care I for aught besides? You will be my world—my all. With you to gaze at—to solace me—what could I not endure? Every thing! Reproach—scorn—exile from my country—my friends! Only say the word—sweetest—dearest Rosalie!—say that you will be mine, and I am happy!—happy!—how feeble the expression to portray the ecstatic feeling with which such a prospect fills my heart!"

As he thus spoke, his eyes truly flashed with the radiance of ecstasy.

"Oh, God! in mercy support me—strengthen me in this bitter hour of trial!" cried the almost distracted girl, as she struggled to disengage herself from the impassioned embrace of Fitz-Ernest—and having by an effort freed herself from it, she fell at once prostrate before him. She encircled his knees with her arms—she embraced them; but it was only to supplicate his mercy—his forbearance.

"Fitz-Ernest!" she exclaimed, "as you value the peace of the short time I shall have to exist, unsay those dreadful words."

"What! do you reject my suit?" he cried, almost fiercely; "do you spurn a love like mine?"

"Listen to me!" she said, as she remained kneeling at his feet, from which position he vainly endeavoured to raise her.

"No!" she exclaimed; "here will I remain until you have heard me speak—until I have softened your heart. 'Fitz-Ernest,' she continued, "you are speaking to one—breathing words of love to a being, whose days are numbered. But a short time remains for me. I have here a deadly malady—my lungs are gone. As sure as I am a suppliant at your feet, six months will not have passed, before all my earthly troubles are ended. This is a secret. I have divulged it to no one—but it is true as there is a God in Heaven. Now heed what I have to say. No power would, at any time, have tempted me to listen to your wild proposal; therefore, dear, *dear* friend of my youthful, happy days, remember that the only comfort I can hope for on this side of the grave, is to retain the love of those I so much value. Do not seek to tarnish my fair fame—to deprive me of the only possession to which I cling with fervent tenacity—which soothes my every grief—renders even trouble light—the affection, I may almost add, the respect and regard of your revered parents. Fitz-Ernest," she continued, her low tones becoming even more emphatic, "if you could imagine how soothing it is to my mind to reflect that when I am no more your sweet mother—your good father—your sisters, will all remember me with love—will honour the spot which, I am certain, they will prepare for my cold remains, you would not seek to deprive the poor girl of her only happiness. By your conduct to-night, you may, perhaps, destroy these long-cherished hopes, which have been my support through all that I have undergone."

Here a fit of coughing stopped her utterance, and when she removed her pocket-handkerchief from her mouth it was saturated with blood.

"There!" she exclaimed, "and now will you believe me?"

Fitz-Ernest was indeed inexpressibly shocked, surprised, and heart-stricken. He trembled so vio-

lently, that he had scarcely strength to raise her, which she now allowed him to do, as she was almost exhausted, and he placed her on a seat.

"I have not said half what I have on my mind," she continued, after a short pause, "and speak I must, though they may be the last words I am able to utter. You say you love me—then you will promise to obey my dying injunctions."

Fitz-Ernest started. Rosalie saw that his heart was softened—that the fiery nature of his feelings were calmed, for his manly spirit was quite subdued by what he had seen and heard—and tears, which sprung from a mingled source, chased each other from his eyes.

"Leave London to-morrow," she said; "but, before you do so, write to Lady Constance. Tell her you grieve that you have given her sorrow—and of sorrow, believe me, she has tasted bitterly!—but say that your dream of darkness is over—that you will return, at the appointed time, to claim her as your bride—an altered man! Nay, start not! turn not thus away! it is Rosalie who implores—who solicits this last boon from you; and, when she is gone, her remembrance will no longer be a feverish phantom of your imagination, as she is now, alas! But, may she not be your mediating spirit? may she not be allowed to hover round you, and witness your earthly bliss? Blessed, you must be, if you obtain the affections of one so good, so excellent. Should you persevere in your present course, my doom is sealed! I shall be cast off—scorned—by those whose smiles are, to me, as the dew of heaven upon the parched earth—and the wretched, heart-broken Rosalie will die—despised—unloved! Her ashes will not rest peaceably, and oh! so blest, in the shaded corner of the dear church-yard at Fairbourne. No one will love her—no one will heed her! but the finger of scorn will point at her, as the worthless ingrate who turned from his affianced, noble bride, the heir of the house of Belmont!"

How vainly can description portray the strong emotions which struggled for mastery in the breast of the unhappy young man. They were as varied as they were tumultuous and agonizing.

But, in the words and demeanour of Rosalie, there existed an indescribable power, which seemed to arrest every feeling. The influence it created was most powerful—most extraordinary. It appeared as if there emanated from her a halo of sanctifying purity, which altered the current of his ideas. He could almost fancy her unearthly; and as still, with a fixed gaze fastened upon her countenance, he watched its varying and almost heavenly expression, a sensation, which partook even of awe, began to pervade his senses. She was indeed too pure, too celestial, to be approached by mortal passions; an inspired messenger sent to point out to his erring heart the path of rectitude; and, though his admiration increased to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, the storm of feeling, which raged so furiously, seemed calmed. Oh! how commanding is the stern, the peremptory influence of virtue!

Rosalie noted the change in his speaking countenance. Now was the moment to take the decisive step—to accomplish the work of justice—to urge the being whom she so fondly—so devotedly loved, into the only path which could lead to future happiness for him, although that path would conduct him far from her for ever. For a moment a sudden feeling rendered her mute. A pang of regret shook through her whole frame.

She held within her grasp—but was about to relinquish a treasure which she had so long hid with such tenderness—such care; her heart had been its hiding place, but from that heart it was to be torn, never even in idea again to enter.

For an instant she covered her face with her hands, and then starting up she cried, "Will you promise me to go—to endeavour to forget me—no," and her voice softened, "not forget, but only to recollect me as your little *protégée* of former years. Say will you write to Lady Constance, whose heart your unkindness has agonized; and that you will return and fulfil your plighted vows to one whom you once prized, and whom you will learn to love more kindly than ever? Say you will, or you will kill me—with your own hand would you inflict my death blow?" she exclaimed vehemently, as a loud knock announced the return of the family; and Fitz-Ernest terrified by the agonized expression of her countenance, murmured a faint assent; and once more taking her in his arms, and pressing a hurried though fervent kiss upon her pale lips, rushed distractedly from the apartment.

Rosalie, with a degree of feebleness that could scarcely sustain her exhausted frame, had only power left to regain the bed-side of the child, and there she sunk in a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XLIX.

On entering her boudoir, Lady Belmont found every thing still and quiet. One small lamp alone burnt upon the table. The door was open, which led to the chamber of her sick child, but all was silent. With a heart beating with maternal hopes and fears, she gently advanced. He was asleep, she felt certain, and that idea, in itself, was comfort.

The room was almost in darkness. A single light dimly lent its influence to rescue it from total obscurity. How was Lady Belmont startled as, gently, she gained the side of the bed, to perceive a figure stretched across the foot of it. At the first glance she imagined it to be the nurse, who, wearied with watching, had given way to sleep; but as her eye became accustomed to the subdued light of the room, she saw, with amazement, the extraordinary dress, the dishevelled locks of the prostrate form; and, in another moment, the identity of Rosalie flashed upon her mind.

For a short space she was occupied in listening with delight to the calm breathing of the little boy, which told a certain tale of amendment, it was like.

A holy thing from heaven,
A gracious dewy cloud.

She ventured softly to touch the little hand which lay upon the coverlid; and, with a thrill of joy, felt convinced that the fever had subsided.

"Dear, kind Rosalie," she thought, "how considerate, how good; after all the fatigue of the evening, to come here and watch over my boy. No doubt her voice has soothed him into this sweet sleep," and she looked tenderly towards the motionless girl; then, for the first time, there was something in the complete prostration of the position she had taken which struck her as unnatural. She approached, and lifted up one of her hands, which hung listlessly over the side of the bed, and its icy coldness made her absolutely shudder.

"Rosalie," she whispered anxiously, as she endeavoured to rouse her.

But no answer could she obtain, and Lady Belmont, thoroughly alarmed, hastily summoned the nurses, who soon discovered that the poor girl was quite insensible.

With tender care they raised her, and she was carried into the adjoining apartment, and laid upon a sofa. Lady Belmont immediately sent for the marquis, and every means were used to restore her, when, after a lapse of some minutes, they had the inexpressible relief of seeing her open her eyes.

With a wild start, she sat upright on the sofa; and removing, with her hands, the hair that had escaped from its bands, and was falling over her face, she stared round with a bewildered gaze, turning her eyes confusedly from one person to another, as if she were seeking for some particular object. Her mind was evidently wandering; but, on the marchioness gently placing her arm round her waist, and affectionately soothing her, she again uncovered her face, which she had buried in her hands, and, after looking for a moment steadfastly in the countenance of her benefactress, convulsive sobs heaved in her bosom; at length she was relieved by a burst of tears. Her kind friend would not, even by a word, interrupt the soothing current, which she hoped might eventually calm her.

The entrance of Lord Belmont with the apothecary, in a degree, roused her, when the marchioness began to question her anxiously; and Rosalie confessed that she had been long much more indisposed than she had dared to acknowledge; and revealed symptoms of her complaint which spread consternation amongst all those who heard her.

She now earnestly entreated to be allowed to return home. Unfortunate girl! she longed ardently for the privacy of her own apartment, where she might commune alone with her almost distracted mind; and, with fervent prayer and supplication to the throne of grace, implore for that healing consolation which nothing in this world could afford.

She told me, afterwards, that she felt as distinctly as possible, that she had received her death-blow. An inward feeling imparted to her that the dread fiat had gone forth, and that her days were numbered. And too true were her words!

Lady Belmont, in vain, implored her to remain with them that night, but she was firm in her refusal; and, at last, they were obliged to allow her to depart in the carriage, which the porter had, by her orders, detained; the marchioness insisted upon her being accompanied by her own maid; and it was with a foreboding heart that she saw her, with feeble steps, leave the apartment.

In common with others, Lady Belmont had remarked with anxiety, the increased cough of Rosalie; but the dreadful symptom which that night had met her eye, was like the passing knell that told of death. It was with a chill at her heart, that she bade her farewell. At a very early hour, the next morning, I received a note from her ladyship, requesting my immediate attendance.

I found that she had risen at an early hour on purpose to see me, and my blood curdled in my veins when I listened to all she had to say. Her apprehensions, I felt, were but too well grounded. She had written a note to her own physician, which she requested I would, without delay, deliver, and then repair, with that skilful practitioner, to the abode of the invalid.

I must ever remember, with respect and admiration, the genuine sympathy and solicitude which this charming lady evinced for our poor *protegee*. It was with tears in her eyes that she related the events of the preceding evening, and the nurse's account of the length of time Rosalie had sung to the little boy, in order to sooth him to sleep.

This seemed to distress Lady Belmont extremely, for she could not help attributing much that had occurred to the over-fatigue which Rosalie had sustained. Little did she guess the real cause of the catastrophe!

It was with a heavy heart that I quitted her ladyship, and proceeded on my anxious mission.

CHAPTER L.

When Fitz-Ernest bent his way towards the apartment of his little brother, I must do him the

justice to say, that he had no idea whom he should meet there. Distracted as he was by the feelings which were struggling for mastery in his breast, still he then retained sufficient strength of mind, and a sense of what was due to himself and others, to enable him to endeavour to avoid throwing himself, intentionally, into immediate temptation and danger; and he would not have thus intruded himself into Rosalie's presence had not chance brought him before her.

There was much that was good and estimable in Fitz-Ernest's nature. His heart was affectionate and kind, and he loved the little invalid with almost the softness of a woman's feelings. He had returned late from the House, and, finding that the family were not at home, he was anxious to ascertain, before he retired to rest, the last report of the sick boy.

He expected to find some attendant in the boudoir, but, seeing it unoccupied, he intended to seek the nurse by entering the sleeping apartment. But as he softly opened the door, his ear was caught by a sound that proceeded from it, which suddenly arrested his steps.

Did his ear deceive him? Was it a creation of his fevered fancy? Or was it really that syren voice, which struck so sweetly upon his surprised senses?

He advanced a few paces, and for some time remained listening, with emotions too intense for description, to the plaintive melody which, like the notes of an Eolian harp, breathed a wild and mournful cadence. Oh! as he listened, how intense became the agony of his heart—and how he longed to look upon her, although the sight would be torture.

Did not wisdom, did not prudence whisper loudly in his ear, to fly? But, under the influence of such feelings as those which now so violently agitated him, when were their dictates ever regarded? No, he would not, could not tear himself away. Once more would he gaze upon her unseen—he would glide unperceived into the darkened room, he would take one long, last, lingering look—and then he would depart; when to return?—*Never*, was now his impetuous idea.

Passion had thrown its disfiguring veil over his senses, and he thought but of himself.

He entered the chamber unheeded by her he sought. She was too deeply absorbed in pouring forth the pious effusions which were flowing from her lips; and her eyes were either fixed upon the countenance of the little boy, or raised in his behalf to heaven. Fitz-Ernest remained, therefore, in the full indulgence of a spectacle so perilous to his peace of mind. How long he knew not, for all was forgotten; every consideration, save the one before him.—The scene that followed I have before related; and the sufferings of the wretched young man may be, in some degree, imagined, when, after leaving the presence of Rosalie, he found himself in the solitude of his own apartment—alone with his sorrow—no voice but that of conscience sounding in his ear. In Rosalie's words—her actions—her looks, there had been almost a supernatural effect. In his present excited state, the impression she left upon him was most thrilling—most imposing. Her form was still before his eyes, as she knelt with dark tresses floating in wild disorder over her bosom—the red dress of Medea rendering even whiter the alabaster purity of her skin—her uplifted hands, as she implored him, with a voice which echoed to his fancy, to immolate the love he bore her, on the shrine of honour and of justice. She appeared no longer to his heated imagination a creature of this world; a vision she must have been—too celestial—too hallowed for a mortal to approach; and, for a moment or two, he felt almost calm.

But then, again, he remembered her beauty—her captivation; and the strong current of his feelings heavily overpowered him with their maddening—their overwhelming force. No man that has once yielded up the government of his mind, and given the loose rein to his impetuous wishes, can tell how far they may impel him. They issue frequently from a small source, and, at the commencement, might have been easily stopped; but, unchecked, they are soon widened, till the bank, at last, is totally thrown down, and the flood is at liberty to deluge the whole plain.

The brain of Fitz Ernest was a complete chaos. The night thus passed by him was, probably, the most wretched of his whole existence. He stood in the world, solitary with his misery—to no one dared he confide the secret of his sorrow; and, in the present benighted state of his feelings, he could think of no hope—no comfort.

The morning quickly dawned at this season of early light, but its reviving influence wrought no cheering effect upon him; standing at an open window, he remained with his eyes fixed, with a vacant stare, on the brilliant spectacle of the rising sun.

At length, harassed by the fatigue of mental agony, he threw himself upon a sofa, and endeavoured to shut his eyes, to compose himself, in order that he might have the power of reflection, for he knew that he must act decisively. The remembrance of his solemn promise to Rosalie, urged him to fly from a spot whose very atmosphere teemed with peril to his peace of mind.

He had scarcely taken his position of rest, when a knock at the door startled him, and his servant entered, bearing in his hand a letter. The man looked surprised at the appearance of his master, whom he, of course, expected to find in his bed, and asleep; but he delivered the letter in silence, and Fitz-Ernest desired him to leave the room.

When again alone he looked at the address, and the faint tinge of colour which remained in his cheeks entirely fled, and he trembled so violently that his hands refused their office of breaking the seal. He laid the unopened epistle upon the table which stood before him, and really gasped for breath as he endeavoured to summon resolution to peruse its contents; for, at the first glance he knew the hand-writing to be that of Rosalie.

CHAPTER LI.

When Rosalie arrived at her residence in Regent street, the knock at the door, which announced her return, was answered in an instant by Johnson, who, alarmed by her lengthened absence, was anxiously awaiting her. Ever mindful of the feelings of others, the exhausted girl exerted herself, and got out of the carriage without showing a symptom of the indisposition which every moment became more overpowering.

Lady Belmont's maid followed her, and delivered the message with which she had been charged by the marchioness; the purport of which was, that she considered Miss Elton very ill, and that early the next morning she would send Dr. C— to see her. Many were the proffers of assistance which the civil waiting-woman tendered to Johnson; but Rosalie begged her to return, without delay, to her lady.

Indeed, anxiously did she long to be alone and unrestrained, save by the presence of her faithful—devoted nurse.

It was with some difficulty that she had strength to ascend the stairs. Her breathing was hard, and she complained of a sharp pain in her chest. John-

son was dreadfully frightened; but, after she had assisted her mistress into bed, she hoped she was becoming a little more tranquil and easy; seated by her side, she was listening with intense solicitude to the sound of every deep drawn sigh that proceeded from her labouring breast, and watching her closed eye-lids, in the trembling hope that sleep had weighed them down, when suddenly Rosalie started up and said, "I dare say you will oppose what I am going to ask—you will think I am mad—wandering; but before I allow myself to sleep, I must write a letter. It is of the utmost importance, and my mind will have no rest—no peace, until I accomplish my impatient desire."

It was vainly, indeed, that poor Johnson remonstrated against an act so full of danger—fatal to every hope which she might entertain of a speedy recovery from the present alarming attack. Rosalie urged her request with so much vehemence; every refusal seemed to excite her so fearfully, that at length, with tears of distress, she was obliged to yield; and after propping her patient up with pillows, so as to make the position as little fatiguing as possible, she placed the desk before her, and Rosalie immediately commenced writing in an eager, rapid manner, the following epistle:

"I scarcely think that I said enough to you in our dreadful interview to night. I did not sufficiently impress upon your mind the earnestness of my appeal, to your sense of what is right and due to yourself—to others—to me, the unhappy Rosalie. Some more last words I must now convey to you. I talked at random when I said a few short months, and I should be no longer here. Certainly the Almighty is all powerful—nothing is impossible with him; but as far as human eye can see, my conviction is that my days even are numbered, and at this moment I feel as if I were laid on my bed of death. But I may linger on for a short span, and as long as I am here, it depends upon you entirely, whether the remaining hours of my life are past in that peace of mind which will enable me to sustain the trial which human nature must endure, under the influence of the awful dispensation of the all-wise ruler of my destiny, who has thought fit to bid me prepare to relinquish my young life; to resign it with submission, and His name be praised! with the assistance of his spirit I shall be enabled to do so with peace—almost with gladness; for that blessed influence has cheered the gloomy path and shed a radiance over the appalling prospect of the dark valley. And now you alone, Lord Fitz-Ernest, seem to stand an obstruction in the passage that would conduct my soul in peace to heaven. But you have it in your power to remove this torturing—this cruel impediment. As long as I may be permitted to linger in this world, your words—your looks, will haunt my imagination. Then promise to recall them, to forget that you ever uttered them. Swear that you will never dare to indulge in feelings which seem to implicate me in their culpability, although, heaven knows, in heart I am innocent. But may it not be imagined by others, that I, in some secret manner, might have assisted in the delusion which seems to have obscured your better reason. Heaven is my witness, that I would rather have forfeited every consideration on earth, that I most prized, than have proved the unconscious cause of what you now endure. Therefore, dearest, most beloved friend, towards whom my heart must ever beat with gratitude, for all the goodness that you have never failed to pour upon me, so gently, so kindly; attend to my last request. Go far from hence; in solitude, in prayer, seek to purify your mind from the baneful infatuation, which like a mist obscuring a fair prospect, hangs for a short space about it. Pray for

support, as I have done through all my miseries; and may the healing influence of devotion prove to you as consoling as I have felt it to be. Offer your supplications to heaven in the belief that there is a power that can give us comfort; and the mercy which it vouchsafes so graciously to all, who with confidence rely upon its assistance, will incline it to afford it. Believe me, you have only to wrestle with the delusion that blinds you, and reason and justice will lend you their aid, easily to overcome it. Promise me you will go from hence; first having made your peace with that sweet being, whose heart I fear you have already clouded with sorrow. She will, I am sure, forgive you, and await with patient forbearance, the time when you will return restored to yourself, and worthy to claim her as your bride. And oh! Fitz-Ernest, if my prayers could bring you happiness, what felicity would be your portion! My dying hour will be spent in supplications to the Almighty in your behalf.

"And now, I must bid you farewell! My failing strength tells me that I must cease, although I feel that I could dilate for ever on a theme to me so deeply interesting. Let me give you assurance that all will go well, that I may die in peace, without the dreadful idea presenting itself to my mind that I have been the cause of destroyed hopes—disappointment—unhappiness, to those to whom I owe so much; to whom my heart so fondly clings. Oh! if you could fathom the depth of the love—the gratitude, I feel towards all your family! and to imagine, oh! dreadful, cruel thought! that I, who would have sacrificed my every hope to shield them from a moment's pain, should be the wretched obstacle to interpose between them and their happiness! The very idea appears almost to deprive me of existence; to bring me to the very threshold of death! But you, in mercy, will remove this agonizing, this torturing load! you will not allow me to die—helpless—hopeless—heart-stricken! you will surely send me some words of peace—of assurance—of repentance! Grant my earnest prayer. Say you will be your own honourable self again, my friend, my comforter! and heaven protect and bless you!" ROSALIE."

For some moments after she had finished this letter Rosalie sank back upon the cushions, exhausted—almost fainting; but she roused herself with an effort, and, with her own trembling hands folded and directed it, then calling Johnson, she said—"Now, make no remarks on what I am going to say, dear Johnson, trust to your child. As soon as it is light, take this letter and give it, yourself, to Lord Fitz-Ernest's servant; unless you promise this," she added, with vehemence, "I cannot even attempt to calm myself—for, on the result of its delivery, hangs the only prospect of peace I can have on this side of the grave. I know I am very ill my poor nurse. Prepare yourself for that from which, I know, you shrink with dread; but, for my sake you need not be miserable," and she threw her arms fondly round the neck of the weeping woman. "Your child will gain by that which you may, for a time, lament. Why should you wish to retain her, struggling painfully a few more years in this tumultuous world? You ought to rejoice that there is a prospect near at hand, for me, of peace—of rest! But you will do what I have asked you, dear good nurse, and I will try to sleep, and, perhaps, I may feel better when I awake."

But these last words were pronounced in a tone that belied their meaning. Poor Johnson with bitter tears acquiesced in all she demanded, and Rosalie tried to tranquilize herself to rest, but in vain. Her cough became more and more troublesome, and, when the almost distracted woman arrived at

Belmont House with the letter, of which the reiterated prayers of Rosalie induced her to be the bearer, she had also to communicate to Lady Belmont's maid the dreadful intelligence that Rosalie, in coughing, had ruptured a blood-vessel on her lungs, and that she had left her, at that moment, under the charge of a surgeon whom Myrtila had hastily ordered to be summoned.

The wretched woman did not linger a second after she had executed her commission. With a heart almost broken by sorrow, she returned to the bedside of her beloved child.

Rosalie turned an eye upon her full of anxiety, as she approached, and, seeing by her countenance that her wishes were accomplished, an expression of calmness superseded the excitement which had so severely agitated her frame; and, laying her head gently on the bosom of her faithful nurse, she closed her eyes, and soon fell into a tranquil sleep. The surgeon recommended the utmost quiet, and promised to return, in order to meet the physician whom Lady Belmont was to send that morning.

It is easy to imagine the dismay of Gabrielli, at this most direful catastrophe—this death-blow to all his avaricious prospects.

At one fell swoop, he saw his airy fabric swept to the ground. He had returned home, heated by wine and excess, and the first object that met his eyes was his sister, pale and haggard from extreme terror. At first, stupified by the effects of intoxication, he could scarcely comprehend, and would not give credence to her words. He received her communication with a burst of furious impatience; but when, at length, the surgeon was brought to him, and he heard the words "There is little hope remaining;" then did the truth, indeed, burst upon his senses.

But, how was it received?

I turn from the subject with disgust—with horror? That man—that dreadful man! was he not the cause of all this misery? Truly the expectation of the wicked shall perish!

I feel that I can scarcely proceed. The events which succeeded were of a nature so sad, so painful, that even now, their remembrance overpowers me. Day and night, the shadows of those who are departed, appear before my feverish imagination; and, when I think that I am left, and those, so fair, have gone before me, with the poet I could exclaim:—

"When I remember all

The friends so link'd together,
I've seen around me fall,

Like leaves in wintry weather!

I feel like one

Who treads alone

Some banquet hall deserted;

Whose lights are fled,

Whose garlands dead,

And all but he departed.

Thus in the stilly night,

Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,

Sad memory brings the light

Of other days around me."

I repent that I ever acceded to the request that induced me to lay before the public circumstances which can but engender feelings of sadness. But, having proceeded so far, I will endeavour to complete my task, although it has become a heavy one, and opens wounds which neither age nor time has been able to heal in a heart which once loved with so much fondness the angelic being, whose history I have attempted to relate.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.—Here the narrative assumes a different character. Mr. Leslie

whose health was in a most infirm and declining state, had become still more ill and suffering, and the agitation which the relation of the foregoing story occasioned his mind, was so intense, that I was fearful I should be deprived of the conclusion of a tale so fraught with interest. However, Mr. Leslie, with the kindness and consideration that marked his every action, seeing my disappointment and regret at giving up my task as amanuensis, called me to the side of his bed, to which, of late he had been almost totally confined; and, giving me a key, desired me to open a drawer in a cabinet which stood in one corner of the apartment, and to bring him a bundle of papers which I should there find, fastened by a black riband.

He sighed heavily as I placed the packet in his hand, and almost immediately delivered it to me again, saying, "Take this; you will find therein what will materially assist you in the conclusion of the history, which I have not strength left to finish with my own lips."

The documents which I then received, put me in possession of every fact that I was anxious to obtain; and, with the assistance of one who was an eye-witness of the scenes which follow those already recorded, I have been enabled to conclude the history of the *Cantatrice*.

CHAPTER LII.

We will return to Fitz-Ernest, and behold him with Rosalie's letter still in his hand, his eyes fixed upon the lines which he appeared to be reading over and over again, with a sort of half-bewildered air, as if he scarcely comprehended their meaning. So perfectly lost was he to every consideration but the one object before him, that it was hardly perceptible to him, that some one had again gently knocked at the door. As he did not heed the summons, it was not repeated; in another moment Lady Belmont slowly entered, and when he lifted up his eyes, his mother stood before him.

She actually started and turned pale, when she beheld the countenance of her son. She had expected to find him in bed, probably asleep; but in one rapid glance she saw that his head had not that night pressed his pillow; and there was something so haggard—so truly wretched in his appearance, as he turned his face first towards her, and then again averted it, hiding it with his hand from her view, that her maternal heart shrunk with a feeling that partook of horror—of surprised dismay; and at once she said, "Fitz-Ernest, my dear, dear son, what is the matter?" then sitting down on the sofa by his side, she took hold of the hand that was pressed tightly over his forehead, with the same degree of tenderness that she would have evinced to the infant Algernon, and drew him towards her. A mother's softness knows no diminution. Is her child in sorrow, and all the tender love, the anxious self-sacrificing feelings return with the same ardent, heartfelt devotion, which glowed in her breast when she was wont to press him to it in his helpless infancy.

Fitz-Ernest still continued for a short time to avert his face; but "there is something in sorrow that breaks down the pride of manhood, that softens the heart and brings it almost back to the feelings of infancy; and even in advanced life, the mother that looked on his childhood, that smoothed his pillow, and administered to his helplessness will be the friend to whom he will, with most confidence pour forth his heart—on whose bosom he can shed tears which he would be ashamed that any other eyes should witness. For there is, indeed, an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother that tran-

sends all other affections of the heart. 'Tis neither to be chilled by selfishness, daunted by danger, weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled even in gratitude. And if adversity overtake her child, he will be dearer to her through misfortune; if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him in spite of it, and if all the world cast him off, she will be all the world to him."

Lady Belmont saw that something had deeply affected her son, and she implored him to open his heart to her.

"Speak to me, my child," said she. "Confide in your mother, who has ever been your friend, as well as parent."

Still Fitz-Ernest did not speak; it was no sullen feeling that made him silent. The agony of his young heart was too great for words. It was subdued almost to the weakness of a woman. Lady Belmont gave him time to recover, in a degree, although her own soul sickened with the dread with which the mysterious grief of her son had inspired her. However, she exerted herself, and began to speak on the subject which had thus brought her unexpectedly into his presence, trusting it might have the effect of rousing him.

"Fitz-Ernest," she said, "I came to tell you of a circumstance that I am sure will shock you much. Johnson has just been here to communicate the intelligence that our poor Rosalie is dreadfully ill; she has ruptured a blood-vessel on her lungs, and heaven only knows what will be the consequence."

At these words Fitz-Ernest started on his feet, with an exclamation that almost amounted to a fearful cry; and then said in a voice, the accents of which thrilled with terror in the ear of his mother, "It is I who have murdered her. It is I who am answerable before heaven for her death—it is your wretched—worthless son. You would spurn me, mother, if you knew all; you would loathe the sight of him you have so loved and cherished; oh! mother, mother," he exclaimed, throwing himself on his knees before her, "'tis I who have destroyed that sweet angelic Rosalie."

The agony of Lady Belmont's feelings almost equalled those of her son. The dreadful words of Fitz-Ernest brought to her imagination a crowd of images, which her alarm exaggerated in frightfulness. She absolutely gasped for breath as she thought of what might be the real purport of his dreadful confession. She had hardly strength to exclaim, "Fitz-Ernest, for the love of mercy, say what you mean: keep me not a moment longer in this awful suspense. What is it? Are you going to tell me, that she, whom we have nourished with such fond affection—whom I have taken to my heart as pure and excellent—am I about to hear that she is false—perfidious? Oh! heaven, avert this evil," she cried, "let me not hear that she, whom I looked upon almost as an angel, has been as the treacherous serpent in our path."

"No, mother, no," cried Fitz-Ernest, rising, his countenance almost brightening, "fear not for her, she is—oh! how can I express her excellence—her purity—her nobleness of mind. 'Tis I who have been the deceitful tempter—the perjured lover; and just heaven is already wreaking its vengeance on my head, by inflicting the tortures of self-reproach I now endure. But I will tell you the whole of my miserable story. Listen to me with patience, and do not condemn me till you hear all."

Lady Belmont already experienced a sensation of inexpressible relief. A dreadful idea had crossed her mind; and she inwardly thanked heaven that it was but the phantom of her bewildered brain. Fitz-Ernest proceeded in a rapid—hurried manner.

"When I offered my hand to Constance Deland,"

I really loved her, although my love was of a calm and gentle nature; but I acknowledged her virtues; I admired her perfections, and was perfectly convinced that, with her for my wife, I might anticipate a life of calm and certain happiness. But little did I know the weakness of my own heart! Had I even suspected that there was hidden in its recesses, so deep a well of unawakened passion, no consideration would have tempted me to offer to so perfect a being as Constance affections so variable—so unstable. But at once to come to the point—I saw Rosalie, and from that moment I was a wretched man. There was an indescribable magic in her charms, which even you, my dearest mother, can imagine; from the instant I beheld her at a rehearsal at the Opera-house, the aspect of my whole destiny seemed changed. I have been the slave of passion; and fearful have been the consequences to me; for though conscience is not always strong enough to guide, it still has strength sufficient to dart a sting. I have been torn by contending feelings—the voice of honour upbraiding me for my want of allegiance to my affianced bride—imperatively urging me to return to her feet, whilst my heart was filled with love for another. I must do myself some little justice, by declaring that I did strive to overcome the weakness—that I did wrestle with the infatuation, which indeed obscured my better reason; and you may have observed that I shunned the society of this house—was scarcely ever present, when *she* was here. I had even made up my mind to leave London—England; to banish myself, in order to fly from my passion. But last night, heaven knows, without design, for I knew not *she* was there, I found her kneeling by the bedside of Algernon—radiant in loveliness, with that voice of matchless melody, pouring forth strains which might, indeed, have penetrated a heart of stone. What then, do you imagine, they would produce on mine, already yearning as it was towards her with such devoted energy? I gazed upon her unperceived, until reason vanished from my mind. I lost all command—I was beside myself—all was forgotten, save that lovely creature, to whom I offered my life—my hand—my fortune! I urged her with empassioned force to fly with me.”

“And what was her answer?” cried Lady Belmont, with breathless anxiety.

“Such as an angel might have listened to. Yes, dearest mother, she rebuked my presumptuous suit; she recalled me to a sense of duty; she said all that might have been expected to flow from a heart so pure as hers. Prostrate on the earth, she implored me to hear her dying words; she made me promise to fulfil my engagement with Constance. Oh! you may think of her with redoubled admiration, with respect, with even gratitude; and here is a letter which I have since received from her, and which will confirm every word I have spoken.”

Lady Belmont, with much agitation, perused it, as Fitz-Ernest stood before her, his eyes fixed with intense earnestness upon her countenance; and whilst he watched it melting into tenderness and admiration, as every line conveyed to her mind the purity and excellence of the poor girl, who, in the midst of so much mental and bodily suffering, had exerted herself to write, tears again fell from Fitz-Ernest’s eyes; but they were drops that flowed from a purified source. They were tears of repentance, of sorrow unmingled with passion.

When the marchioness had finished the perusal of this affecting document, her heart was too full to allow her to speak; but she pressed her son tenderly in her arms, and that action spoke at once of sympathy, and also of forgiveness; in the midst of all his distress, Fitz-Ernest felt soothed, for his mother was still his friend.

When Lady Belmont could command her voice to speak, all that she could now do was to implore him, by the love he bore her, to compose himself: she promised, with her own lips, to administer the only solace that poor Rosalie could now receive—a message of peace and consolation from herself; and, without one word of reproach, left him in order to make every arrangement that might, in any way tend to mitigate the sufferings of the afflicted girl.

CHAPTER LIII.

Sir Francis never awoke with a lighter heart than on the morning which succeeded his interview with Lady Gertrude, at St. James’s. Every object appeared to him bright and cheering; all was *couleur de rose*. His inward feelings were as new as they were pleasing; for the first time, almost, in his life, he had formed a plan which was virtuous in its intention; he could look with a bold glance upon the prospect it afforded; and felt a sort of exultation in his own surpassing merits. He could not help acknowledging to himself that his previous life had really been too reckless, too bad. It would be impossible to go on in such a course much longer; but now he would study the rake’s last expedient, reform, and become a much more steady character. An opportunity at this moment presented itself, unattended with many of those repugnant sacrifices which he imagined must ever follow in the train of a matrimonial engagement. A fashionable, high-born girl had always been a horror to him, and to make proposals to one such he had ever regarded as an impossibility; but in the instance of his present attachment, the whole matter was different. He had no haughty, supercilious dame to sue to; whose stiff, pompous, unbending father was also to be conciliated, the frigidity of his dignity thawed, and condescension ensured by the promise of large settlements and fortunes for younger children, &c. &c.

The very idea of Hymen, under these circumstances, would have given him a cold shiver; and never had he seen one beauty, in his own sphere of life, whose charms were sufficient to induce him to reflect upon the subject with less repugnance.

Now, though the very notion would have made him furious, had any one possessed presumption enough to accuse him of it, the same ideas that had caused Templeton such disgrace, exercised their influence over his own feelings. The present step could not be attended with such sacrifices as were generally the accompaniments of an act so fraught with evil consequences to the liberty of a man of pleasure. There was no host of ceremonious relations to be enumerated in the catalogue of the bores of his acquaintances; and, as for the legal part of the business, he had no one to urge, to consult, but the dictates of his own generosity; and these were all munificent and liberal towards the object of his affection; so all was smooth, every thing seemed smiling around him, and, in the liveliness of his heart, all the time he was performing his toilette, he was singing joyfully,

“What is life when wanting love?
Night without a morning:
Love’s the cloudless summer’s sun
Nature gay adorning.”

That day he was to dine at Belmont House, and Gertrude had promised that Rosalie should be there. How long would be the hours that must intervene to the impatient lover! but he had an imperative engagement which would take him out of London, and might probably detain him till near

the dinner hour. That would fill up the vacant morning, and he consoled himself by thinking, that there would be little prospect of catching even a casual look of Rosalie before that time.

There was that passing in his mind which seemed to soothe him into patience; and we must do him the justice to say, there was much of a redeeming character in the feelings of kindness and generosity which actuated his present conduct.

Under the overwhelming mass of vices and follies which obscured the better qualities of our baronet, there were some latent sparks of goodness. Circumstances had increased, as well as engendered his faults. He had been his own master from the age of childhood. He possessed no parent—no friend to admonish him; so, ever accustomed to be flattered—caressed and indulged to an excess the most pernicious, his vicious propensities, instead of being checked, were even encouraged. His education had been begun at Eton, and completed at college; but his private character had never been cultivated. Completely left to chance, born with passions violent and difficult to control, of course they soon ran riot, and the tares which sprung up so plentifully prevented any of the good seed which nature had implanted in his breast from blossoming to perfection. Of good seed there was, indeed, some amongst the many weeds which desolated this fair prospect. Sir Francis possessed a most exalted opinion of his own perfections—of his position in life—in short, of every thing that appertained to him. The idea of his not being acceptable as a husband—and to Rosalie—could never, for a moment, have entered into his imagination. Men who have lived the life which he had done, and those who have mixed little in the society of women, excepting of those of a very inferior class, fix the standard of their intrinsic merits at a very low rate. They imagine that vanity and mercenary considerations influence their every feeling. They have no idea of the single-minded nature of their true affections—of the fervour and disinterestedness of their attachment, which even partakes of enthusiasm.

Sir Francis had not the slightest misgiving as to the acceptance of his suit. He thought, perhaps, he might have a little trouble in getting her away from Gabrielli, and perhaps have to disburse a large sum of money, to indemnify him for the great loss he would sustain in Rosalie, as her talents must ensure him such a bountiful harvest.—But that did not at all distress him. He was ready to compromise, to any amount, for his estate was enormous, and, strange to say, not very heavily encumbered.

As he turned into Bond street on his way to the country, he passed Storr and Mortimer's; there he suddenly halted, and entering the shop, asked to look at the diamonds that were preparing for the bride elect of the young Duke of C—; after examining them, he ordered a set to be put into preparation for himself; making, however, some additions and alterations, which would render the *parure* more costly and expensive.

"As I am about it," thought Sir Francis, "I may as well transact a little mope business this morning, for I shall want every thing in a great hurry, and these rascals are all so dilatory;" so he rode off in the direction of his coachmaker, and gave orders for a splendid London chariot, and other equipages, which were to render the future Lady Somerville the envy of the *beau-monde*.

After this was accomplished, he felt that he had achieved a great deal, in a short space of time.

And now, he must make the best of his way to Richmond; first, however, taking care to pass the house which contained her who had thus inspired him; and, as he turned his eyes upon the abode,

he was thinking that he might compare her to a diamond, enclosed in a case unfit to receive a gem of such value. He fancied that there was a peculiar appearance of desolation about the mansion, for the upper windows were closed. Little did he imagine, when, with a heart throbbing with joy and hope, he gazed upon it, that scenes of distress and sorrow were passing within its walls.

Sir Francis proceeded on his country expedition. It was a visit of duty and interest, which he was obliged to pay about once a year, to an old aunt, who had declared her intention of making him her heir; and a clear ten-thousand-a-year would, at her death, devolve into his already well-filled coffers.—The old lady was very ill, and had sent for him; or, probably, at this moment, Sir Francis would not have been in the mood to volunteer a visit to a sick room.

When he arrived there, he found her extremely ill, so much so that her death was instantly expected, and he remained, for some time, awaiting the event; towards the afternoon, however, she rallied, and he was able to return, but with only a few moments left to dress for dinner, and repair to Belmont House.

On reaching Hill street, the porter placed in his hand a letter which, he said had arrived almost immediately after Sir Francis had left the house that morning. It was from Lady Gertrude, and was written under the most painful agitation.

She told him that Rosalie had been taken dreadfully ill, and added that they were all so much shocked and overcome that they did not feel equal to seeing any company at dinner that day.

The letter almost fell from the hand of Sir Francis, so much did its contents surprise and discompose him. How little had he anticipated this frustration of the hopes, in which he had revelled with such delight!

Amidst all the vicissitudes of time and life, who has any title to reckon upon the future? At one period or another, it is certain that the calm will be troubled and the dark cloud arise. No warnings of any approaching disappointment had ever dimmed the lustre of the prospects of this man of prosperity and pleasure. He had always looked forward with a smile, and indulged in the hope that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and even more abundantly."

'Tis thus we witness the progress of the thoughtless—their folly and presumption—their pride and levity, which make for themselves a fantastic, imaginary future; that, deluding them for awhile in vanity, too often terminates in misery.

All, hitherto, had flowed with an even course to Sir Francis. He was not accustomed to be thwarted, and his feelings now were of a mixed nature.—He was not only distressed, but disappointed. His annoyance and unhappiness were not decreased by reflection; and, when he thought of her—so brilliant—so beautiful! stretched upon a bed of pain and sickness, his heart became softened, every fear augmented, and in another moment he rushed out of the house.

First, he thought he would immediately go to Regent street, there to gain some further tidings of the sufferer; but again he changed his mind, and with hurried and rapid steps arrived at Belmont House, and, sending up an earnest petition to be admitted into the presence of Lady Gertrude, after a short delay, was ushered into her morning room.

He found her in a most agitated state; and, truly, his sufferings at that moment almost equalled her own.

The account she had to give him, was not calculated to compose his spirits; for, with tears of anguish, she informed him that Lady Belmont had

only just left Rosalie's bedside, and that although for the moment she was rather better, the medical attendants spoke most despairingly of her situation. One could have hardly traced in the dejected man, who, with downcast eyes and faltering steps, was seen to issue slowly from the splendid mansion, the gay, the thoughtless Baronet, who had ever, ere this moment of disappointment, felt that he had all the world before him.

But such is the transitory nature of our earthly hopes. Fondly, we project some favourite plan—we think that we have provided for all that may happen; that our measures have been taken with vigilant prudence; and, on every side, we seem perfectly guarded and secure. But it is not so to be: some event happens, unforeseen by our dim perceptions, which turns the whole course of things into a new direction, and blasts all our fondest wishes.

CHAPTER LIV.

Mr. Leslie had arrived at Regent Street. From the very strong affection which he entertained for the unfortunate girl, the agony of his feelings may be imagined, when as he entered the house he was met by the woman Myrtille, who without the slightest caution announced to him the fatal opinion of the medical man. His first impulse was immediately to go to Rosalie; but he was told that she was at that moment sleeping; therefore he went into the drawing-room to await the time when she should awake, and there he found her miserable mother.

It was indeed a sad interview. The work of death had proceeded with a very slow pace, although it had commenced its certain destruction on her frame; but as she herself expressed it, little had she anticipated that, with its fatal dart fixed in her own breast, she should still live on; and one so young, so fair, so blooming, should go before her. All she felt was not merely grief. That self-reproach which seemed always to follow her with its upbraiding voice, was ever ringing in her ears.

Her poor child!—in imagination she saw her glowing with all the hues of health—of happiness in the peaceful days of her childhood—and she had destroyed her prospects. It was through her means that she was brought even unto death; her sorrow was very heavy to bear, and the poor old man who sat beside her, had lost all power of bestowing one word of consolation. He who, in his unselfish nature, appeared always to forget himself when others mourned, was now quite overwhelmed by his own deep misery—and down his withered cheeks flowed tears which he did not even attempt to restrain.

The dear child whom he had loved so well!—Was it really true? No, it could not be—and then a ray of hope darted across his mind. The physician would come, and perhaps he would unsay the cruel words. She must not die. It was out of nature that one so good, so sweet, should perish, and he, the old, the useless, be left to mourn.

"No," he exclaimed, rising rapidly, and pacing with hurried steps the floor; "they have exaggerated the case; that Italian woman always was deceitful, she always hated her. I cannot bear it. I must ascertain with my own eyes what is really the state of the case. Heaven grant that I may find it less dreadful." And he left the room, and proceeded to the door of Rosalie's chamber. But there he paused. A feeling of direful apprehension crept over his senses.

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "sup-

port me—strengthen me, to bear the agonizing sight of my blighted, prostrate flower. Oh! grant me the power still to be, as long as she remains here, the support—which it is my only consolation to think I have been—through all her troubles—sweet, patient angel! Let me still be the staff upon which she has so long—so fondly leant—and if it must be—"and here with almost frantic earnestness he struck his forehead—"oh, if she must die, let these arms be her last resting place."

And now he was about to enter, when the sound of a knock at the street door arrested his steps. It was most probably the physician, and he returned down stairs to meet him. Myrtille at the same moment appeared from Rosalie's room, saying that she was now awake, and Dr. C——, accompanied by the surgeon, proceeded to the sick chamber.

Mr. Leslie did not follow them. He sat pale and motionless in the parlour, awaiting their return. It was a period of dreadful, awful suspense. The words which they would utter, on their return, would be as the blessed messenger of hope, or the death blow to his happiness. The moments seemed hours.

At length the door opened, and the medical men appeared. Mr. Leslie started, walked close up to the physician, with a frantic air, seized his hand, and looking earnestly in his countenance, as if he were perusing eagerly its every expression, he exclaimed, "I see it all—there is little, little hope."

And truly the physician looked grave and sad; for although his professional eye was familiar with scenes of death and distress, he was a man of a kind and humane disposition, and the touching scene which he had just quitted interested him deeply. The brilliant *cantatrice* who had been the theme of universal conversation—whose matchless perfections were poured forth from every lip—the courted—the admired—the star of splendour—the present idol of the London world—how changed had he found her—but still how lovely!—even though the shades of death were gathering round her.

And then her patient sweetness—her resignation! There is certainly a feeling of romance, which hovers over our ideas when we dwell upon the character of an actress; a something which always seems to place it beyond the realities of life. At the moment when our heroine was thus suddenly snatched from the admiring gaze of thousands, who worshipped her almost as a divinity, she was at the very pinnacle of her success; therefore, it was with a peculiar sensation of anxiety mingled with curiosity that, for the first time, the eminent practitioner looked upon this fair emblem of the transitory brilliancy, even of the most beautiful of nature's workmanship.

It was impressed with these saddening reflections, and after consulting for some time with the surgeon, that he appeared before the heart-stricken old man whose only slender hope hung upon the decision he was about to utter; and on being thus with such intense anxiety accosted by him, and perceiving his fearful agitation, he paused; he was reluctant to say what he foresaw would occasion so much misery.

Mr. Leslie continued, "At once tell me the truth—will she, must she die?"

The physician answered, "My good sir, calm yourself; you are not in a state to hear any agitating intelligence."

Mr. Leslie replied impatiently, "I never shall be more fit for the blow than at this moment, therefore tell me at once—do you consider her case desperate?"

The doctor shook his head.

"She may perhaps rally," he said; "but, my dear Sir, grieved am I to add, that I fear it will be but for a brief space."

Mr. Leslie said no more. He attempted to walk towards the door, but he would have fallen, had he not been supported by the medical gentlemen. The shock was too great for his shattered nerves—he had fainted away; and when, after a time, he slowly recovered, he was so weak, so exhausted, that he had not the strength to sustain the trial of seeing Rosalie for many hours.

But there was one, already seated by her couch, who was administering words of peace—of comfort to the sinking girl. Lady Belmont had arrived, and instantly made her way into the apartment of the invalid. The physician had desired that Rosalie might speak as little as possible, and be kept quite tranquil and easy. Lady Belmont soon perceived that she could not be composed, until her mind had been relieved. There was a kind of restlessness about her eyes—a convulsive earnestness, with which she pressed the lady's hand, and looked into her face; which told a tale of mental agitation, unconnected with bodily suffering.

Lady Belmont's great desire was to relieve her from the load which she knew weighed so heavily upon her heart. She had heard from the lips of the medical man, the dread fiat—that she was to die. She might linger for a short time; but any fresh hemorrhage from the lungs might prove instantly fatal. The Marchioness hesitated how to act. She dreaded the effects of agitating her—and yet so well did she understand the feelings of Rosalie, that she was certain nothing would so effectually calm the irritation, which amounted almost to agony, as a few words from herself.

She saw her painfully anxious countenance—her eye of inquiry, which wandered ever and anon towards the door, as if she were expecting something; therefore, she determined to hazard the point, in order that she might breathe the sweet influence of peace—of consolation to her spirit, which might shed brightness over the darkening shades that were encompassing her. Whispering to Johnson to leave the room, she again sat down by the side of the bed, and taking the hand of Rosalie within her own, in the tenderest accents said, "My sweet girl, I know that your mind is not at rest, but be calm—be happy. I know all. Fitz-Ernest has told me every thing, and what I have heard, makes me love you more than ever."

A brilliant gleam of colour passed over the pale cheeks of the sick girl.

"Rosalie," continued Lady Belmont, "dear excellent Rosalie, it would be impossible for me to express the admiration I feel, when I think of your conduct. You have ensured my gratitude, for you have saved my son. Your words have struck upon his ear like the notes of prophecy; they awakened him from his dream—his delusion, and through your medium our dearest hopes may yet be realized. Promise me to be quite calm, not to allow any agitation to excite you, and I will tell you all, without any reserve. You do indeed merit my strictest confidence. Let me see by your countenance, sweetest, that I may venture to say all."

Rosalie looked in the face of her benefactress and smiled, and in that smile were mingled many expressions, but it gave Lady Belmont the assurance that she might continue her relation, without fear of doing the listener any injury.

"It is Fitz-Ernest's anxious request that I should express to you his deep contrition for the suffering which he has caused. Torturing, indeed, are his feelings; as self-accusation renders them doubly insupportable; and indeed it is dreadful, not only to himself, but to me, when the horrid idea presents itself, that he has caused this sad catastrophe—your present sufferings."

But Rosalie shook her head emphatically. "No,

no, in mercy say not so, the disease had long rankled here—the storm, long gathering, was ready to burst.

Lady Belmont implored her to be silent, and continued:

"As long as my son lives, he can never quite forgive himself; but be comforted, dearest," she added, as she saw the large tears roll slowly from the half-closed eyes of the pale girl; "the very pang, that the remembrance will inflict, may bring with it blessed, salutary effects—may act for ever, as a check to those impetuous passions which have been the cause of so much evil. His future excellence—nay even his future happiness, may both derive their source from the blessed remembrance of his virtuous young friend."

Here Rosalie clasped her hands, and devoutly cast her eyes towards Heaven. Her lips appeared to move as if she were inwardly ejaculating a prayer of thanksgiving.

"Every word you uttered—every wish you expressed, he bids me tell you, will be sacred to him. At this moment his mind is too much occupied by what you suffer, for us to expect any thing from him but grief; but he desires me to say that, in time, he may hope to accomplish all that you wish—all that we, his parents have hoped so long, so anxiously. Bless you, we must ever, Rosalie—even honour your memory, should it be the Almighty's will to remove you from us."

What lustre brightened the beautiful eyes of our heroine! She raised the hand which she still fondly held within her own, to her lips, and faintly murmured—"Happy, happy so to die," and then she closed her eyes, and turned her head upon the pillow; and Lady Belmont, hoping that she might sleep, arranged the bed clothes, so as to ensure her more ease, and begged of her to try to take some repose. Rosalie looked her acquiescence; still she sought the hand of her friend as if she feared to lose her. But on Lady Belmont's assurance that she would stay, she endeavoured to calm herself to rest.

CHAPTER LV.

After the rencontre, the result of which was so unfortunate, Arturo, his heart filled with passions which changed his whole nature, with frantic steps rushed forward. He neither saw nor heard. Furiously he pursued his way, causing the bystanders to turn round and look after him in dismay; but when he found himself at length in the noisy streets, he suddenly paused. He pressed his hands across his eyes for a moment or two, as if deliberating, and again walked rapidly forward.

But now he seemed to have some object in view, for he looked anxiously into all the shops that he passed. With swift steps he walked down Piccadilly, and then crossing into St. James' Street, entered a naval and military accoutrement maker's, at the windows of which were displayed to view swords and various other weapons of slaughter.

He motioned with his hand, for he could hardly speak English, that he wished to look at some dirks which attracted his attention. He selected one amongst the smallest, but before he completed his purchase, was observed by the shopman to draw it from the scabbard, and attentively examine the point; there was something in the wildness of his looks, and the fierce gleam of satisfaction with which he ascertained the sharpness of the blade, which made a vivid impression on the mind of the person who served him; and after he had left the shop, he remarked the circumstance, to one of his

companions, saying at the same time—"Well, if that dagger is not the cause of bloodshed, I shall never again pretend to judge of a man's countenance."

On leaving the shop, Arturo placed the weapon in his bosom, and with a ghastly smile of triumph, proceeded on his way; but it was with a calmer and slower step.

Arrived at his lodgings, and in his own apartment, he again drew out his dagger, looked at it with delight, hugging it to his heart, and clasped his hands in ecstasy. Bruno, who had entered the room and watched him unperceived, said that during all these demonstrations of satisfaction, there was gleaming from his dark eye that which absolutely appalled him. It was like the glance of an infuriated tiger, when about to devour the prey which was already within its grasp.

On seeing Bruno, he suddenly concealed the weapon, and commanding himself by a strong effort, began to speak on indifferent subjects, in a voice which he endeavoured to render steady; at the usual hour, he accompanied him to the Opera, and except from a restlessness in his eye, he should not have remarked that any thing had gone wrong with him. During the performance, Mr. Leslie afterwards well remembered thinking there was something very extraordinary in his conduct and bearing, and he had mentioned it to Rosalie.

At one moment, he was sullen and abstracted, at the next, a burst of gaiety and wildness startled them. But Arturo had been so much changed of late, that it did not cause the feeling of alarm and surprise, which it might otherwise have done. They had become, in a measure, accustomed to the variableness of his temper. Mr. Leslie observed to some one, his attitude of watchfulness, as he stood with his head slightly inclined forwards, his large eyes open to their full extent, and fixed with such earnestness upon one particular spot. He was heard to mutter to himself, by another person who happened to be near him—"Perche non viene! Perche si differisce l'istante della mia gioia, quel che ho tanto sospirato!"*

The truth of this dreadful story is, that Arturo was awaiting the arrival of Sir Francis; but owing to the Baronet's imperative engagement at St. James's, my readers are already aware that he did not visit the Opera that night. Arturo lingered to the last, watching, with fiend-like eagerness, his approach; and at last, finding that he did not come, with reluctant steps, he departed, murmuring between his clenched teeth—"Non e che differito."†

The next morning that ensued brought with it—oh, what a load of accumulated wretchedness to the miserable youth.

But did the overwhelming intelligence, that she whom he adored was stretched upon the bed of death, soften his better feelings? Did tears of anguish, which such a disclosure must have wrung from him, act as healing unction to his diseased mind? Would that in mercy it had wrought so blessed an effect! But no, the Almighty, in his inscrutable wisdom, had willed it otherwise; and destined him to be a sacrifice and an example to those around—to caution youth to bridle their impetuous passions, before they deface what is lovely, and transform what might be good and excellent, into the very semblance of a fiend of darkness. May it be a warning to all.

Think not because your passions have not, as yet, hurried you into atrocious deeds, that you may still indulge in them. Habit gives the passions strength, whilst the absence of glaring guilt seem-

* Why does he not come? Why is my moment of joy retarded? That moment for which I thirst.

† It is but deferred.

ingly justifies them; and, unawakened by remorse, the unfortunate wretch proceeds in his fatal course, till he becomes bold it guilt, and ripe for ruin.

Arturo, the highly-gifted—the young—the beautiful, was now—and shuddering nature turns sickening from the knowledge—become the blood-thirsty wretch, gasping for revenge, which nothing but the life of his enemy could satiate. The infernal fire had kindled within him—the worm that never dies was gnawing at his heart.

On repairing to Gabrielli's house at the usual hour, the fact of Rosalie's illness was suddenly communicated to him. Had he not been in a most unnatural state, this intelligence would at once have almost entirely annihilated him. But now the only effect produced was a sort of stunned feeling. The already fearfully dilated pupils of his eyes gave to his countenance an expression nearly of vacancy. He seemed as if hardened into stone.

Having stood for some time leaning against the wall motionless, he started up, and flew out of the house, saying in a low hollow voice, "She will be gone," and then almost an air of exultation crossed his countenance, "at least," and he clenched his teeth, "she can never be his or mine," he added, and a sort of stifled cry escaped his lips, as if at that moment a dart had pierced his heart; he then rushed impetuously into the street.

But never for a moment, during that day, did his steps lead him more than a few paces from the door. He might be seen walking hurriedly to and fro without any intermission during the long and weary hours.

Every time the door opened, he looked into the countenances of those who came out, with an air of eagerness which spoke for itself; but he dared not trust his tongue to ask the question, "how is she?"

His haggard worn look—the frightful paleness of his cheeks, attracted the attention of every one; and the passers by shrunk from his glance, for his appearance was that of a maniac.

The shades of evening were beginning to encompass every object. The brightness of the morning was followed by gloom, a violent thunder storm had ensued, and the rain now poured in torrents. But still Arturo was at his post. Little did he heed the drenching wet which must long ere this have penetrated through his garments. No doubt the disturbed movements of the elements harmonized with the gloomy nature of his soul. They were more soothing than the most brilliant sunshine, which at this moment would have been like mockery to his distempered imagination. Welcome were darkness and desolation, for how could there be light, when she, the fairest of nature's creation, was drooping—dying?

He hailed the night, it would shut from his sight every object, and leave him alone with his sorrow. Once when the door opened, a softened feeling almost prompted him again to enter—to endeavour once more to obtain a look—only once more—of her whom he thus mourned; for with the direful feelings which possessed his soul, the deed of darkness which he planned to commit, he felt was about to place an eternal barrier between them.

"In Heaven thou wilt be," he cried, "where I can never enter; but it must be so, the Almighty has averted his eye from me, I feel that I am left to myself—alone and defenceless, to wrestle with the powers of perdition. They have taken possession of me—their chains are about me, I am a doomed wretch, nothing will satisfy their insatiable appetites but my ruin. I feel that I am undone."

"But then again," and a ray of light seemed to break upon his soul, "if I could but look upon her angelic countenance once more—that face which

breathes of Heaven, perhaps still I might be saved ; the demons would not presume to gnaw at my heart in her presence ; I might again be allowed to hope—to anticipate—not happiness here—that is utterly impossible, but that hope, which her sweet voice so often whispered in my ear, might still be left to me, to smoothe the path to my grave.”

Influenced by these soothing thoughts, he took some steps as if about to enter ; but his progress was suddenly arrested, by some one rushing impatiently past, and on turning to see who it was that thus rudely passed by him, his eye fell upon a countenance, which turned, as it were, his heart into a ball of fire.

“ Ah ! ” he cried in a harsh sharp voice, and his hand plunged into his breast as if seeking for something ; but the intruder, who was no other than Sir Francis Somerville, too much occupied with his own reflections, heeded him not ; in a moment he disappeared from his sight, and the door was shut upon him.

It did, indeed, seem as if the Almighty had withdrawn his protection from this unhappy young man, as if a dark cloud had shut him from his sight. To our blind eyes how inscrutable are the ways of Providence. In vain do we attempt to explore its mysteries. “ It would be as easy to sound an unfathomable deep with a scanty line, or with a feeble wing to ascend above the stars.” We must submit, therefore, to mystery and darkness, in the course of every event, and instead of repining at the obscurity which envelopes many of the dispensations of Providence, it is our part to bow with resignation, and still to adore.

At the moment Sir Francis appeared, a change had come over the spirit of the young Italian ; another instant, and he might have been in the presence of Mr. Leslie. Perchance he might have been allowed to behold the sainted being, from whom he could not have departed with a heart inclined to sin ; for she would have spoken to him, and every word that fell from her lips, would have acted like balm to his agony.

She would have said much to comfort him, she would have told him that she only went a brief space before him ; that if he loved her they might meet again ; she would have implored him to seek that mediation, by which alone this hope might be realized. Oh ! had the arrival of Sir Francis been retarded, what dreadful consequences might have been prevented ! But it was otherwise ordained. The wretched Arturo was destined to be the instrument, in the hand of the All-wise, to testify his fearful power—his awful will !

Rosalie, as she lay in a perfect state of tranquillity, totally free from pain, but hourly becoming weaker, although she closed her eyes, did not sleep ; busy memory gave full employment to her thoughts. By turns, all those she loved so well, were dwelt upon with deep solicitude ; and Arturo’s image presented itself most anxiously to her mind.

She thought of him with all his excitable feelings ; she sickened at the idea of his sufferings on her own account ; and turning to Johnson faintly whispered his name, asking whether he had heard of her illness, and how he bore the intelligence ; she then earnestly requested that when he called she might be informed of it.

Had Arturo only known this—but he was now left to himself, his detested rival had appeared before him—had impeded his progress—had shut the very door upon him ; and there he stood—transfixed—the furies had again seized upon his heart, his hand clutched his dagger, the dreadful deed was about to be done. The rising moon, which had struggled through the clouds and shone for a few moments brightly over the spot, was again obscured. A dark mass of vapour floated over it and

shrouded its light ; as if unwilling that its pure radiance should illumine a scene of blood and horror.

CHAPTER LVI.

Sir Francis, on entering the house, earnestly requested to see Mr. Leslie, and was soon ushered into his presence. He was received at first with a degree of coldness, but the reserve of the good old man’s manner, rapidly melted away, when he saw the real distress and agitation of his unexpected visitor.

He had, however, little to say, which could lessen his anxiety. Mr. Leslie’s own spirits were sunk to the lowest ebb. Hope had totally withdrawn its support, and to all the impatient inquiries of the Baronet, his only answer was a desponding shake of the head, whilst, at the same time, tears coursed each other down his withered cheeks.

Sir Francis, with all the impatience of his nature, was dissatisfied. He would not believe the extent of the evil. He thought that from others he might gain less gloomy intelligence. The old man exaggerated—Myrtilla would be more satisfactory—and he begged to see her, but her account did not revive him. The only improvement in the detail was, that Rosalie at that moment was calm and tranquil. Some hours of rest and cessation from cough might be productive of a good effect ; but she also shook her head, and was anything but sanguine in her hopes, as was too evident from her disturbed countenance.

On being again left alone with Mr. Leslie, in unfeigned distress, he hastily approached him, and seizing his hand, he exclaimed, “ You little know what I suffer—this day, which has terminated so fatally, I expected would have been the happiest of my life. You look surprised, but so it is ; and I now tell you that, sanctioned by my cousin, Lady Gertrude, I had intended this very evening to offer to your protegee my hand and heart. I believe it would have been in my power to have added to her future happiness—to have gilded her days with joy and gladness. Prosperity would have been her portion ; and now what a change ! the blossom of hope is blasted, and the expectation, which promised such unbroken harmony, is left to perish. I can scarcely bear the idea, it is so sudden—so dreadful. But has every thing been done ? Let me send for some more medical advice,” he cried, hastily rising, “ what are two opinions in such a case !—I must insist upon having more. When are the doctors to be here again ! ” Mr. Leslie mentioned the hour.

“ Then I shall send my own physician to meet them.”

And so earnest and anxious was his manner, that Mr. Leslie had not the heart to contradict him ; and his evident wretchedness was so great, that his departure would be a relief to him ; for overwhelmed as he was by his own sorrow, he was in no state to listen to the vehement exclamations of the disappointed lover.

Little did this excellent man imagine, when with a sigh of regret, he watched the retreating figure of this splendid looking young man, whose noble bearing and extraordinary attractions, were, perhaps almost unrivalled, and who had just evinced feelings, which inspired his auditor with a very improved opinion of his heart ; little indeed did he think, when the door closed, and shut from his view the tall aristocratic form—so erect—so commanding—that in another moment, the hand of an assassin would prostrate to the earth, one whose looks seemed to defy adversity.

Mr. Leslie had sunk back into his chair, his

mind filled with the recollection of the scene that had just passed before him. He was thinking upon the transitory, the unstable nature of the hopes and expectations of even the most prosperous, when his ear was struck by a sound that startled him with horror.

It was a shriek of agony! His mind, full of the idea of Rosalie, immediately fixed upon her as the cause of this fearful exclamation. In an instant he had rushed to the landing place, and was about to ascend the steps which led to the sick chamber, when another sound broke upon his senses, and he at once knew that it proceeded from the lower part of the house. He found that the other inmates of the dwelling, alarmed by the same noise, were hastening towards the street door, from whence the appalling cries issued.

Mr. Leslie, impelled by anxiety to learn the cause, hurried also towards the spot; what a scene met his eye! Gabrielli was kneeling and supporting in his arms the form of a man. He rushed forward; with a feeling almost of desperation, he looked upon the countenance, and beheld, oh spectacle of woe! one who appeared to be a ghastly corpse, from whose breast was pouring the life blood; and this dreadful image of a murdered man was he who had a few moments since, stood before him, animation sparkling from his now closed eyes, every pulse beating with life, with health, in the very pride of strength and youthful manhood; now he beheld him bleeding, prostrate, like the magnificent oak, that a brief space before had reared its stately head above all its companions of the forest, and in the next moment was levelled to the earth, by the restless blast of the tempest, there to lie prostrate—motionless—but magnificent even in its fallen state. Oh! it was a sight of sadness—of distraction; and Mr. Leslie looked upon it with the glazed eye of horror.

Who could have done this deed of darkness? was now the general exclamation. A mob was rapidly collecting, and became every moment more and more excited, as the story spread and the spectacle of destruction was witnessed.

The cry was becoming fierce and loud for the murderer. No one had been seen to escape from the spot. In the mean time the apparently lifeless body of Sir Francis was gently raised, in order to be carried into the parlour, there to await the arrival of the surgeon.

Mr. Leslie stood by it, but it was not to offer any assistance; with hands clasped firmly together, his eye fixed immovably on the ghastly object before him, with an expression of horror and despair strongly marked upon his countenance, he seemed as if he were suddenly transformed into stone.

The persons who assisted in removing Sir Francis were obliged to speak to him several times, to request that he would give them room to pass; but he appeared to hear them not for some time, and after frequent attempts on their part, to command his attention, he started violently, then lifted up his eyes; and it was so ordained that they were to rest at once upon the murderer—those eyes that had never looked upon him but with kindness, were now destined to denounce the wretched youth who had so long been fostered by the genial ray of benevolence and love which till now had shone so brightly upon him.

The moon which had before hid its light behind the dark cloud, now shone forth with a radiance which illuminated every object; and as if heaven directed, shot its rays full upon the figure of a man who stood leaning against the iron railings. His arms were folded, and had not his eyes been open, and that their expression told a tale of horror, from the livid paleness of his countenance, he might have

been imagined to be in a state of insensibility; as perfectly motionless did he appear.

Mr. Leslie stood gazing upon him, as if fascinated by the fatal glare of the rattle snake. He could not remove his eyes, and as he gazed a cry of agony burst from his lips, which attracted the attention of all those who stood around him. They followed the direction of his glance—they saw the object which had thus moved him, for in one of the hands of the immovable figure there gleamed a dagger, and the hand which held it was red with blood.

The unhappy old man, seemingly almost distracted, shrieked aloud a name, and the tone of his voice thrilled through the hearts of all who heard him. In another moment he had fallen down in a state almost as death-like as that of the other lifeless form; then, with one accord, every eye turned toward the miserable Arturo, who evinced no sign of consciousness, and the truth flashed upon all. He was the assassin! his hand had done the atrocious deed! A yell of execration passed from every lip, and the infuriated mob, ever rapid and summary in its impulses, rushed towards him, and instant vengeance did they long to wreak upon one so vile. He would have been torn to pieces had not a band of constables arrived and rescued him, that he might be delivered into the hands of justice; passively, without the slightest show of resistance, did the miserable youth resign himself into their power. Indeed the expression of his countenance changed not. His eyes were fixed—his teeth were clenched. It was only when the officers of justice desired him to give up the dagger that he evinced any sign of consciousness. He then shook his head impetuously, and made a movement to plunge it in his bosom; on its being forcibly wrenched from his grasp he became violent; it was with some difficulty that he was overpowered by numbers, and at last placed in a hackney coach and conveyed to a place of confinement, where he was strongly ironed. The next morning, when he was visited in his cell, in order to be brought before the magistrates, he was discovered to be in a state too dreadful for description. He was a raving maniac!

In the mean time, Sir Francis was placed upon some bedding on the floor of the parlour, and in the shortest possible period, medical advice of every description was crowding round him. Soon it was ascertained, that although most desperately and dangerously wounded, life was not extinct; and as Mr. Leslie, after a lengthened period of insensibility, opened his eyes and cast an agonizing look of inquiry around, he was told that Sir Francis was not dead. At these words the old man had strength to raise himself upon his knees, and lifting up his hands he whispered the words, "Thank heaven! thank heaven!"

CHAPTER LVII.

It is hardly necessary to say how universal were the interest, sympathy, and curiosity with which the crowded London world received the information of these accumulated catastrophes; and with what avidity every ear drank in the numerous and varied reports which were floating in all directions, each bearing a different character, and increasing, if possible, in horror at every new relation. It was the theme of every tongue—nothing else was talked of. The story became the most romantic of romances, and certainly in the tale there was much of the reality of romance. The beautiful and talented *cantatrice* who stood, as it were, a moment

before, in all the radiance of genius and loveliness, in the presence of an admiring public, had now vanished for ever from their sight. She would now be only as the dream of former bliss, bright, but evanescent—sparkling but for a moment, like the pure dew of the morning, too soon exhaled.

And then, Sir Francis Somerville. The prosperous—the courted—the envied; what a fate was his! Lying in a state of hopelessness—murdered by the hand of an Italian youth—who had been the envy of all the male creation in London, from his personal attractions, which had also ensured for him the admiration of every female heart.

It was a dark, a horrid story; but a love for the marvellous beats strongly in the hearts of us all, that feeling mingled strangely with those of commiseration in the present instance; and the ever-thronged street which was the scene of all this tragedy, was more than ever resorted to. There was a kind of excitement and interest even to look upon the windows of the house which contained the two sufferers—for Sir Francis was not able to be moved from the spot where first he was laid; and it was with no slight degree of difficulty, that several of his servants at the door, aided by peace officers, could prevent the crowd of impatient and curious inquirers approaching too near, so anxious were they to enter, in order that they might feast their eyes upon the place which had been the scene of so many horrors. Deep beds of straw had been strewn along the street, and constables had been stationed to keep order, and maintain as much tranquillity as possible. So intense is the feeling which the marvellous creates in the mind, that there is but very little doubt that every class, more or less, is swayed by its influence; I believe it to be a fact that more carriages passed down Regent street the day succeeding this calamity, than were ever known before to resort to it; and many were the fair countenances who gazed upon the closed shutters of this house of woe.

Extraordinary to say, during all the noise and confusion occasioned by the appalling events of the preceding day, Rosalie remained undisturbed. A strong opiate that had been administered, caused her to fall into a deep and refreshing sleep; after many hours of uninterrupted slumber, she awoke calm and composed; and, in her hopeless state, was, perhaps, the only one amongst her friends and those who surrounded her, who was tranquil, and even cheerful. As the bright summer sun shone into her chamber, there was something almost of gladness in her tone of voice, as she whispered to Johnson: "Send Mr. Leslie to me, he will rejoice to see me better."

But how could the poor old man present himself to her at that moment? His night of suffering had been unbroken by any slumber; and as the morning light dawned upon him, one might have imagined, from the appearance of his shattered frame, that in those few hours of intense misery, he had advanced at least twenty years in age. He had ever before this period borne his years bravely—scarcely had he looked so near the age of man;—this morning found him indeed the withered, bent old man. Almost paralyzed seemed his limbs—his hands shook as if with palsy, and his eyes had no longer power to restrain the tears which would ever and anon gather in them.

His was a most enthusiastic temperament, and he had placed his warmest affections upon two young beings; the interest he felt in their welfare had given a buoyancy to his feelings; he was no longer old whilst he thought of them, and followed their young ideas. Indeed, he had a peculiar feeling of regard for all young people, and this feeling in itself seemed to preserve the freshness of his own ideas. But now, how crushed were all his

hopes—his affections! The two blossoms, whose opening beauties he had so long tenderly watched, and with his own hand nurtured, were now, how cruelly blighted! The one fair flower laid low by the all-wise hand of heaven; the other—and he shuddered again and again, when the horrid history recurred to his mind. He must have been forsaken by the Almighty—delivered by his own furious passions into the power of the prince of darkness. And this wretched youth was now consigned to the hands of keepers, raging with madness, whilst at the same time a fever burnt in his veins, which threatened soon to terminate his miserable existence. Oh, what a tale of woe—of despair!

Suffering under such a load of grief, how could Mr. Leslie present himself before Rosalie? Johnson scarcely knew how to act or what to say. The poor woman was half bewildered by all the agonizing events that had happened. She could only at last stammer forth that Mr. Leslie was in bed, and leaving her for a moment under the charge of an attendant, she sought the afflicted man, in order to deliver to him the message, in hope that it would rouse him from the stupor of grief into which he had fallen. She told him the words of Rosalie, and implored him to take some repose, in order that he might again be of use to his beloved protegee.

But he could not be prevailed upon to move until he had seen Lady Belmont, who was every moment expected.

What a scene did the interior of this abode present to our excellent Marchioness! What a house of desolation did she enter? Death and horror on all sides. As she approached leaning on the arm of the Marquis, the agitation of both was painful to behold!

It was the son of Lord Belmont's own sister who there lay almost a murdered corpse.

The Belmonts had ever been a prosperous family. They had never possessed an intimate acquaintance with grief, therefore, perhaps, although prosperity had not hardened their hearts—want of experience in the uses of adversity had rendered the shock, which now burst upon them, more stunning from its unexpected nature. It is difficult to bow the head at once to the adverse strokes of fate.

Sir Francis had not yet spoken. The surgeons had not again examined the wound; but from the state of his pulse the exhaustion was very frightful, and little comfort could they give.

But still, where there is life, human nature is inclined to cling tenaciously to hope; and as Lord Belmont looked down on the noble form of this splendid specimen of manly beauty, he could not help thinking that it was sad as well as extraordinary that one blow should fell him so completely to the earth.

We will however, pass over the lapse of a few days. It is of no use detailing the weary moments of the leaden hours that pass during the first period of dangerous sickness.

A week had nearly closed, and still Sir Francis lived; but so ill—so exhausted, that instead of reclining on the silken couch in his own sumptuous mansion, he lay supported by mattresses, on the floor of the shabby parlour in Gabrielli's house. He was too ill to say much, but there was in his countenance and demeanour that which interested all those around him—a submissive humility little expected from the hitherto proud, arrogant Baronet. In the solitude of the sick room, the awful change which had succeeded the feverish excitement of his former existence, and as if by heavenly inspiration, a new train of thoughts, far better

thoughts seemed to have banished the ideas that had formerly occupied his mind.

He felt convinced that he must die, and death with all its horrors, was for the first time steadfastly contemplated by him. It was indeed an awful object surrounded by hopeless misery, and at the very idea his fever increased—his agitation how dreadful was it to bear!

And then by chance his eye fell on the pale spectre of the old man, who was almost always kneeling and praying by his low couch, and he whispered to him, "If I die, is there no possibility of my being saved? Can there be mercy for one who has lived such a life as mine has been? a life of sin—of dissipation—of total recklessness—discarding every thought, every feeling, but that which tended to increase my pleasures. My whole career has been one of selfish gratification—and if—there be a hereafter, what will that existence be to me? If nothing but that which is clean can enter heaven its doors must ever be shut against a man of the world—at least—the world in which I have lived."

Mr. Leslie spoke, and his words were indeed like oil and wine poured into the wounds of his tortured spirit. They were as a living spring, purifying his heart, and diffusing comfort and refreshment to it. It was indeed a touching spectacle, which, could it have been revealed to the eye of the gay associates of the suffering penitent, might have proved a salutary lesson to many—might have suggested to those who were at the giddy height of enjoyment, that they too might fall from this pinnacle of pleasure; that too often "the end of mirth is heaviness;" and whilst every joy seems sweet to the taste, its effects are poisoning and undermining every hope.

How would it have astonished them, to behold their former companion, with all his external advantages, his wealth, his station, humbled to the dust; with no other comfort left him, but clinging with anxious trust to the words of religious consolation, which flowed from the lips of the venerable clergyman, whom he scarcely permitted to leave his side. Like the rich man in the parable of Lazarus, gladly would he now have exchanged all his possessions, not for one drop of water, but for one ray of hope to illumine the dark view of the future.

Mr. Leslie seemed to have no other consolation remaining, but to endeavour to strengthen and improve the faith of the sufferer, and his pious exertions were not thrown away. By degrees a calm succeeded to the turbulent emotions, which before so fearfully shook his frame. Religious hope had brought from Heaven the olive branch. She carried in her hand the signal of mercy. Devotion had opened to him its holy and blessed sanctuary, that sanctuary in which the wounded heart is healed, and the weary mind is set at rest—where the cries of the world are forgotten—where its tumults are hushed, and its miseries disappear—where greater objects open to our view than those the world presents—where a more serene sky shines, and a sweeter and calmer light beams upon the afflicted heart. Such a prospect may, indeed, cheer the darkest hours of life, and afford a solace even in agonizing pain.

The calmed state of his mind had a powerful influence over the bodily sufferings of the invalid, and although the medical attendants dared not pronounce the word, the idea did sometimes suggest itself to their minds that, though next to a miracle, there still might be hope.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Rosalie was lying on a sofa, a change for the better had taken place, and she was able to be removed from her bed: but in her countenance there was that which defied hope.

"Mr. Leslie," she said to the old man who was sitting by her couch, "I have long wished to speak to you, but you have looked so sad of late that I have not dared to make you, as I have hitherto done, the repository of my every hope and fear—my every thought and wish."

And here she took hold of his hand and pressed it tenderly to her lips.

"You must not look so wretched, now that your Rosalie is so composed, so happy. Only think of the blessings which encompass me on every side. Shed no tears for me, dear, kind friend—consider the joy I must feel in being thus supported as I am through all my troubles, by those kind friends whom you know how tenderly I love. Oh! you cannot imagine my happiness, when I see that angel Lady Gertrude hovering over me, with her own hand ministering to my wants—and her mother, oh! how feebly could any language of mine express how venerated, how dear she is to my heart, which is bursting with gratitude for all her goodness to me. I never dared to hope for bliss like this. I would not exchange the hallowed composure of my feelings for the prospect of a lengthened existence. It has ever been your study, my friend, my father, to teach me to fix my hopes on high; and there they are raised, I cannot lower them again to this earth. All here is confusion, misery—darkness to me; but when I continue to look above, then there is light and brightness, hope and comfort. I have but one wish ungratified, and perhaps it is ungrateful with so many other blessings to ask for more; but still the idea harasses me, and prevents my having that perfect peace which otherwise I think would pervade my mind. I long to disclose it, and yet I dare not."

She paused and looked anxious, her colour changed, and she breathed quickly.

"Speak," cried Mr. Leslie, "and fear not. If it is within the verge of possibility, your desire shall be accomplished."

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosalie, clasping her hands with fervour, "if I could only think that I might die on my own little bed in the white cottage at Fairbourne! I know," she cried, starting up and speaking with an anxious voice, "I know that it is at present untenanted, Lord Belmont bought it in almost the same state as we left it in, and I heard a short time ago, that the person who has occupied it since we were there has quitted it. Oh!" she continued, "it may be a foolish fancy—weak you may deem it, but how freely do I imagine would my spirit depart in the pure air of that sweet spot, but here in this dreadful London, where every breath I draw, seems laden with the weight of its hated atmosphere, here," she continued, "do not think me wicked for thus saying, I feel I could not die in peace. In my calmest hours, there is something of dread, of fear, which appears to interpose between those holy feelings which ought now alone to inspire me. I know I have sufficient strength to travel, and it is not merely a selfish wish that actuates me. But what comfort would it be to me, to leave my mother in that little nest of peace—there to linger out her few remaining days. For when I am gone Signor Gabrielli will be too glad to get rid of her—I well know that. I have considered it all again and again. As far as her temporal means are concerned, she will be but as she was before her wretched marriage; and I have some little to

leave her, those presents that have been forced upon me, during my professional career. They will afford a little ready money should she require it; and well am I convinced that, as long as she lives, there are those who will never neglect her—*you amongst the number, dearest Sir.*”

Mr. Leslie could not speak. He could only press her hand in token of acquiescence in all she said. Rosalie proceeded:

“Once at Fairbourne, close to my last resting-place, far from all these scenes, the remembrance of which still hovers over my spirit, like the memory of a dark dream, I shall have nothing farther to dread. The few remaining hours that may be allowed to me, I can then devote, without one earthly anxiety to interfere, solely and wholly to the thoughts of my final departure. Perhaps it would be impossible to imagine the degree of ecstasy which the idea of being at Fairbourne occasions me, the sort of longing thirst I have to breathe the air which, to my fancy, blows there so pure and balmy. What luxury to inhale once more the well remembered perfume, which the evening summer breeze wafts from the honeysuckles and jessamine, which encircle the porch of the sweet home of my childhood—it would be indeed bliss.”

As she spoke, her eyes beamed with the brightness of former days, and the brilliancy of the flush which illumined the marble whiteness of her complexion, gave such an air of beauty to her whole appearance, that, while her devoted friend gazed upon her, he could almost have imagined that it was already a celestial vision upon which his eye rested.

Mr. Leslie promised to arrange every thing. He foresaw no obstacle, if the medical attendants would give their consent, and vouch for her being able to bear the fatigue of the journey.

“And would it be expecting too much, if I were to ask you to go with me?” she added in a tone of earnest entreaty.

The emotion of the sorrowing man was too great for utterance. He turned aside his head, but eloquent were the tears which fell in abundance from his eyes; and could the language of his faithful and attached heart have been revealed, it would have expressed itself in much the same strain, as that which flowed so eloquently from the lips of the devoted Ruth, “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.”

It may be easily imagined that with friends so anxious as those which Rosalie possessed, with no difficulties had Mr. Leslie to contend.

Every arrangement for her comfort was at once made; her every wish was a command. The physicians although they shook their heads and pronounced the experiment hazardous, still did not negative it altogether; therefore, it was fixed that in a very few days she was to set forth towards Fairbourne, in one of those invalid carriages which are so commodiously constructed as to convey a sick person with little inconvenience or fatigue.

She was to be accompanied by her mother, Mr. Leslie, and Johnson; and the Belmonts who seemed to have really no thought but for the dying girl, determined on setting out about the same time for Belmont Abbey.

As Rosalie had foreseen, Gabrielli made no objection to all this. His wretched wife had long been to him an incumbrance, and his victim had indeed escaped his grasp—had become valueless, worse than useless.

We will draw a veil over this odious theme. It is too painful, and reflection brings with it all the tissue of evil engendered by his means. The

wretch! his avarice and cruelty had blighted the fairest of flowers. She who might have passed a life of tranquillity, peace and usefulness, was cut off in the spring time of her youth—a sacrifice, immolated on the shrine of sordid selfishness.

But retribution sooner or later must overtake the wicked, cowardice and baseness of mind are the never-failing concomitants of a guilty conscience; and though for awhile the Almighty may stay his hand, may withhold his punishment, still his vials of wrath are always ready prepared to pour upon the head of the sinner, and like the hand coming forth upon the wall in the days of Belshazzar, when he least expected it, the just vengeance of the Almighty is ever ready to annihilate the wicked.

CHAPTER LIX.

All the distressing events which had taken place lately, had much affected the spirits of every member of the Belmont family; but there was one who suffered more intensely than all the rest, and with the greatest reason. It was Fitz-Ernest; and had it not been for the support and sympathy which he received from his mother, in his present state of mental agony, he would have been scarcely able to endure the load which weighed so heavily on his mind. But her judicious kindness was the means of averting many evils, and she even took upon herself to be the medium of communication between her son and Lady Constance. With that uprightness of heart and intention which directed every action of Lady Belmont, and in which Fitz-Ernest fully participated, they both thought that there should be no concealment in the business. Lady Constance ought to hear all—every thing, without disguise. They owed her perfect confidence.

Therefore the Marchioness went to her, and told her every circumstance, without the slightest reserve. She knew that much pain would be thus inflicted upon the affectionate and attached girl, but still it was the only honourable course of proceeding. She left it for her to decide, whether the engagement should at once cease, or be postponed for a year, during which time Fitz-Ernest would travel—his health required a change, for the agitation of his mind had visibly affected it.

It was a painful and perplexing decision for Lady Constance to make, for her affections were deeply involved; but she was not without her share of proper pride. She begged for time, for reflection, and the next morning Lady Belmont received a note from her, saying that “although it would be a trial to the feelings of both, still she thought it would be more satisfactory in the end, if she could have some conversation with Fitz-Ernest.”

It was indeed an ordeal for him. He felt that, under the present circumstances, he would rather have faced danger in any shape, than encounter the mild, sad eyes of her, towards whom he was aware he had acted unjustly; and it was with no slight degree of trepidation, that he found himself in her presence.

But she received him with gentle kindness, she was calm, though very pale; and there was that in her manner which went at once to his heart. No reproach was to be found either in the expression of her countenance, or in the accents of her voice, when she said, “Forgive me for causing you the pain of this interview, but it was for your own sake as well as mine that I requested it. I wish to tell you that I feel no anger towards you, for what has passed. It has been unfortunate for us both—for

every one—but I do not blame you. I estimate my own merits at so low a standard that I never wondered at your admiration of one so superior to me, so every way perfect. I know such feelings are not easily controlled; and there were many circumstances which combined to render the interest you felt for her more intense——”

Lady Constance was silent for a few moments, and she saw that Fitz-Ernest's agitation was much increased by this allusion to Rosalie; however, she felt that now was the moment; she had embarked upon the exciting theme, and she must pursue it.

“Lady Belmont has told me that you still wish that our engagement may continue. Is this really your desire, Fitz-Ernest? I wish to hear from your own lips—from your own heart—whether it is true: rely upon me with perfect confidence, consider me as a friend, and far from being an impediment in your way—I will smooth every difficulty should you really wish to get rid of the shackles of a tie, which would be irksome for you to retain. Have no concealment, as I said before, with me. Fear not to wound my feelings; and recollect, I, too, have my share of pride; and although I can extenuate much—forgive much—still I would scorn to wed one who only offers me his hand on compulsion.”

And here the colour mounted in the pale cheeks of Lady Constance, and her mild eye kindled.—Fitz-Ernest's heart swelled with very varied emotions. He could not but admire the noble girl who had thus spoken, and his better reason told him that every quality was united in her that a woman, that a wife, ought to possess, to render a man truly happy. But at this moment his mind was so full of the idea of Rosalie, that it seemed to him profanation, worse than hypocrisy, to think even of another.

And then again, he remembered the anxious wish of his parents. He saw by the countenance of Constance, that though she struggled hard for mastery over her feelings, her varying colour and quivering lips, gave symptoms of strong internal conflict. He knew too well how fondly she loved him.

A painful pause again ensued, and then it was Fitz-Ernest, who, at length, broke the silence.

“Constance,” he said, “you know the whole of my unfortunate story. It is for you to decide my fate. You are aware that my heart, at this moment, is wounded—bleeding—unworthy to be offered to one like you, whose virtues and perfections may well claim the most undivided, most devoted attachment. Through all the ill-fated events which have occurred, believe me when I declare that I never, for a moment, undervalued your excellencies. My feeling has been, how undeserving I was of such a blessing—I shall go far from hence, Constance; time may do much for me; it may assuage the anguish of my conscience, and may also bring with it other salutary effects to my mind. The time may arrive when I shall be improved in stability of character—have gained more power over those impetuous feelings, which have led me into misery, which can never be totally obliterated from my recollection. I trust I may be a better man—perhaps a happier one; and, if I ever feel myself in any degree worthy of possessing such a treasure as yourself, dear Constance—and should you be free to accept my offered homage, the day may arrive when I shall again be suitor for your hand; but now to offer it would be an insult to your excellence, for I am unworthy of you. I dare not yet look upon you, for my heart is oppressed with the consciousness of weakness—of error. And now, Constance—farewell, and though it may be under very altered circumstances—if ever we meet again, heaven grant that I may be more worthy to press this hand,” and he affectionately raised hers to his lips.

Constance was speechless; but her heaving bosom gave tokens of strong emotion. She dared not even lift her eyes from the ground. There was a fierce struggle in her heart, between pride and feminine dignity, against a love so warm, so devoted, that it would fain have bid him stay. And when Fitz-Ernest was gone, what was the distress of her feelings? for, with all the calmness of her nature, she could feel most intensely. And he had left her, and she thought, perchance, her coldness had driven him from her sight. Had her manner been less frigid, it might have been otherwise. It was all her own fault, she was convinced. But he was really gone; and, in the bitterness of her feelings, what would she not have given to re-say every word, to see him once more before her. And then would she have told him, that even his divided heart she could not relinquish; for she loved him with all the disinterested warmth of a woman's first and early love, and though she acknowledged his faultiness—felt his coldness and averted looks, and even whilst worldly consideration was arraying itself against him—now that she saw him suffering—heart-stricken, she forgave all; and though, indeed, this distress had arisen from his love towards another, her attachment grew more tender, for his very sorrow—so enduring is the love of a devoted woman!

And Fitz-Ernest, as he left her presence, was not without his regrets. He felt that he had thrown from him a treasure. It was his wish immediately to leave England, but still there was a torturing anxiety that stayed his steps. He had heard the decision of the physicians; he knew that Rosalie must die, but yet he lingered about the spot where she still breathed.

He told his mother all that had passed between himself and Constance. It was only what she had expected from them both; and all that Lady Belmont could hope, was, that time and the strength of Lady Constance's attachment might, at some future period, ensure the completion of a union, upon which so much depended. In the mean time, Fitz-Ernest was making every preparation for a lengthened tour on the continent.

CHAPTER LX.

Nothing could more strongly mark the improvement in the mind of Sir Francis than the intense solicitude which influenced him on the subject of the wretched cause of his present sufferings. Not the slightest animosity did he feel towards him. Indeed, he took upon himself the sole blame of the dreadful catastrophe. He well remembered the blow which, in the arrogance of his spirit, he had inflicted, without the slightest feeling of remorse, upon the impetuous youth—a blow which he knew he must have caused the very furies of rage in his breast; but in the days of thoughtless anger, when he thus gave vent to every violent feeling, he confessed that he entertained so high an opinion of himself—of his superiority over others that he considered it beneath the level of his own dignity to think, for a moment, of what he had made him endure.

He was now all anxiety that the wretched condition of the unfortunate Italian should be ameliorated as much as possible. He poured large sums of money into Mr. Leslie's hand, in order that pecuniary means might not be wanting, to induce those about him to show him every degree of kindness.

Sir Francis was now decidedly better; but still he remained in the same spot to which he was removed at the first moment that succeeded the sad catastrophe. The physicians were fearful of any

change; and, strange to say, notwithstanding all the discomfort of his present position, he evinced no desire to return to the splendour and luxury of his own habitation. His sole pleasure seemed now to be derived from his conversations with Mr. Leslie, and in listening to the account of the resignation and heavenly state of mind of Rosalie.

It appeared to be a melancholy consolation to him to be under the same roof with her—to hear of her hourly; fain would he have communicated with her by messages—but she knew nothing of the past dreadful events. Her friends would not, for the world, have allowed her last moments to be embittered by the relation of a story so replete with horror. They endeavoured to render every idea peaceful and serene.

Were he at his own house, Sir Francis felt that he could not enjoy so much of the society of Mr. Leslie; and then, in the gloom which seemed to hang about his present feelings, he dreaded the idea of returning to the scene that would remind him so forcibly of his former mode of existence—that existence to which he now looked back with remorse—with disgust. Nothing could induce him to see any of his former associates; and Templeton, who, with all his foibles and follies, possessed the redeeming quality of an attached heart, in vain hovered about the house, endeavouring to gain access to his presence. However, his temporary comforts Sir Francis did not forget; and many a valuable enclosure did he receive, which, although most acceptable, he would have almost relinquished to be allowed to make himself useful to one, towards whom he really felt grateful affection; and, perhaps, indeed, it would have proved a useful lesson to the dissipated dandy, could he have witnessed the mental sufferings of the man whose worldly prosperity he had before imagined must shield him from every wo that could befall humanity.

Often did Sir Francis, as he lay in the languid state of weakness engendered by suffering, say to Mr. Leslie—"Could the gay companions of my pleasures but see me now—could they but imagine what I feel, what a check would it be to them, in their career of dissipation and of vice. Little did I imagine in the prosperous days of health and happiness, that I could ever be brought thus low; how humbly do I now acknowledge, that no joys derived from a source from whence I have extracted my enjoyments, can be productive of any other end but that of misery—of self-reproach. Every pleasure that is drawn from thence can be no more than a transient gush, that comes down impetuously, sparkling and foaming in its course; but how soon does it run out, and leave a muddy and polluted channel. What a melancholy—what a degrading spectacle is the man who, stretched upon a bed of sickness, remembers what he has been during his existence in the world—and oh! how fearful are his recollections! The smiling appearances which gaiety once created are transformed into the blackest shades of vice."

Mr. Leslie, on his own account, as well as at the anxious desire of Sir Francis, was constant in his visits to the wretched Arturo. A carriage of the Baronet's conveyed him to his place of confinement daily. The unhappy youth had been placed wholly under the charge of keepers, and truly it was a heart-rending sight, to behold the total wreck of mind and body of this once beautiful specimen of a human being. The state of mental derangement was so violent that they were forced to confine him in a manner which, to Mr. Leslie, was hard to witness. He knew no one, and his condition was considered hopeless.

One morning, when Mr. Leslie went to see him, he found that his medical attendants had been at last able to do, what they had long wished, which

was, to shave his head. The operation had just been performed, and, with a feeling of anguish, he perceived on a table a quantity of those beautiful black curls which once adorned, so proudly, the head upon which they clustered.

Poor youth!—and Mr. Leslie's thoughts flew back to the moment he had first seen him, when, with such admiration, his eye fell on those rich ornaments; how little did he imagine what a tragedy would be his fate! It was, indeed, with a pang of sorrow that he approached the table, and, selecting two of the bright locks which lay scattered unheeded before him, he placed them carefully in a letter, and then put them into his bosom.

"They will be precious to me," he said; "and there is another, who would press this poor token to her heart with melancholy pleasure."

Mr. Leslie had given orders that, should there ever be a moment of consciousness, he might instantly be summoned; and, to the surprise of all, he was called upon the very next day to attend, as the insanity had suddenly given way under the violent remedies to which the surgeons had resorted; but the state of the patient was most alarming. He was sinking in the most rapid manner.

So generous had been Sir Francis towards Arturo, that every comfort had been afforded to the sufferer; and Mr. Leslie had the inexpressible relief of finding him no longer chained to the ground, a raving maniac, but lying on a decent bed; and, as he approached, and pressed within his own the emaciated hand, he heard the well-known accents, which once gave such pleasure to his ear, now mournfully uttering the words—"Oh! *Signor mio*."

The frenzy had indeed passed, but the exhaustion which followed, the physicians pronounced fatal. Life was ebbing fast, but reason had resumed its full dominion over the mind.

Agonizing were the thoughts of the past. We will not pain our readers by attempting, at any length, to relate the scene which followed, or portray the misery of the feelings of the unhappy youth—the terror of his conscience—the fervour of his repentance. He felt there could be little hope for one who had planned the dreadful deed his hand had perpetrated. But his old and tried friend was at his post, bringing with him, as he always did, peace and comfort, through the mediation of His merits, to whom he besought him to cling.

Seeing that he was thoroughly roused to a sense of his danger, he now endeavoured to lead him, an humble penitent, to the throne of grace. He prayed that tender mercy might be vouchsafed from that beneficent power, who "will not break the bruised reed."

We do not think much of a death-bed repentance; still, in this case, we believe it to have been sincere. One great absorbing passion had obscured the light of reason from the mind of Arturo—had completely perverted a heart otherwise amiable and good; and now, on his bed of death—now that his vision was cleared from all the clouds of jealousy—of passion, he deplored his fatal infatuation—he prayed for forgiveness, humbled to the dust, and with self-aborrence. He felt, indeed, that he had no refuge, but through Him who died for the redemption of sinners; and Mr. Leslie felt cheered, for he could not help indulging in the blessed hope that the sighs of penitence—those bitter tears of self-reproach, might be precious in the eyes of Him who "willeth not the death of a sinner."

A few short days after his restoration to consciousness, Arturo died. This interval had been passed in the most profitable manner.

The dying penitent had scarcely mentioned the name of Rosalie. It seemed as if he wished, as

much as possible, to banish from his mind an image which still had the power to recall him to earthly feelings. By a strong effort to check the course of his ideas, but a few hours before he expired, he sent for Mr. Leslie; and, after having devoutly received the sacrament in the protestant form, he remained for some time resting quietly—his countenance composed and serene. At length he turned to Mr. Leslie, and drawing him gently towards him, whispered in his ear—"I have only one more question to ask—may I dare to hope that I may ever meet her again?"

Mr. Leslie's countenance beamed; there was encouragement—confidence in its expression.

"As far as an erring mortal, like myself, can presume to hope, I should pronounce, that repentance so sincere as yours, my dear Arturo, will be received at that sanctuary where every groan is wafted which is heaved from the labouring bosom; though heard by no human ear, it reaches that which is never closed against the returning penitent,

"His ear is open to the softest cry,
His grace descends to meet the lifted eye,
He reads the language of a silent tear,
And sighs are incense from a heart sincere."

"Rely firmly, implicitly, upon the only support from which you can derive comfort, and then truly may I bid you hope."

This hope brightened the last moments of the ill-fated Italian. His death was calm and holy, unlike the turbulent state of his feverish life. He anxiously sought, and had obtained, in the most generous, unbounded manner, the forgiveness of his once detested rival, but whom he now only remembered with deep contrition, gratitude and sorrow.

A better hope had dispersed the gloom which, for a time, overcast his erring, desponding heart. It was illumined by the cheering rays of celestial mercy; and when Mr. Leslie, at length, with his own hand, closed those dim eyes, which were once wont to flash so brightly, so fiercely, he thanked God for his goodness. He no longer sorrowed for Arturo; he felt that the wisdom of Providence shone forth, in this instance, with conspicuous splendour; that more than one important end had been gained by this sacrifice; and, in the calm and happy moments which preceded the dissolution of the poor Italian, truly did Mr. Leslie feel that love directs all the actions of the Almighty; for, in the divine assistance, which was so plentifully vouchsafed to this faulty, miserable creature, love shone forth, tempered by that justice which never fails to accompany every divine dispensation; and after Mr. Leslie, with the Italian Bruno, had followed his remains to the grave, which, with strictest privacy, but—with every consideration of decency and respect, had been prepared by the orders of Sir Francis, when, at length he had watched the earth close over the coffin, and had taken a final farewell of all that remained of Arturo, although his kind heart was very *very* sad, still his spirit breathed a thanksgiving.

His prolonged life would have been but a turbulent—fitful dream; his impetuous passions he felt, must have ever been in the way of his happiness, his every prospect was dark and dreary; and now Mr. Leslie remembered how full of faith, how repentant was his death bed, and though his tears flowed in abundance, they were not bitter drops.

CHAPTER LXI.

And Rosalie, did she know, that he who had been to her as a brother, he whom she so loved, in

whom she felt so warm an interest, had been thus snatched from this world?

Many were the anxious inquiries she made for Arturo, asking repeatedly to see him. Mr. Leslie said he was ill, dangerously ill, at length he told her he was dead.

This intelligence, at any other time, would indeed, have afflicted her sorely. Now she received it with resignation and calmness. She was herself, standing so completely on the brink of eternity, that she felt, one who, like herself, had so little prospect of happiness in this world, was far more blest, more favoured, when removed early from an existence of pain and uncertainty.

Mr. Leslie of course concealed from her, the circumstance that occasioned the event, but he told her of the blessed state in which he died, and Rosalie wept tears of joy and gratitude.

"My brother!" she cried, as she pressed to her lips the dark lock, which Mr. Leslie had placed within her hand, "with the blessing of Heaven we shall soon see each other; and then how joyful—how pure will be our intercourse—uninterrupted by every earthly, jarring feeling, which here disturbs the tranquillity of happiness. Oh! in those blessed regions, where I humbly hope to be reunited to my kind Arturo, what bliss may we not be permitted to enjoy there—where the friends we love never die, and leave us to sorrow—in that celestial abode, where shines the sun that never sets where that calm reigns, which is never to be disturbed."

The day had nearly arrived, when Rosalie was to set out for Fairbourne. Every arrangement which kindness could suggest, had been formed for her comfort and ease. The white cottage had been prepared, and restored to the state in which she had left it.

Rosalie, who had hitherto appeared to be in an astonishing state of composure, evinced, two days previous to her departure, a degree of restlessness, which was remarked by all those around her; and she at length particularly requested to see Lady Belmont, who had not yet that day paid her accustomed visit.

On her arrival, Rosalie begged to be left alone with her, and then fixing her large eyes upon the countenance of her benevolent friend, she said, "Dearest lady, do not think me ungrateful—never to be satisfied—I have still another boon to ask, before I leave London. With all the kindness I have received—the benefits for which I am so truly thankful; still I feel, that I have a load to shake off my heart, before I can quite die in peace. On one point I am still unsatisfied. Start not, when I tell you, that I wish once more to see Lord Fitz-Ernest; and I must see him in the presence of Lady Constance. I have long perceived by your countenance, that all is not right there—but it must be—shall be. I know him well—he is formed for such happiness, as would be ensured to him, by a union with her, sweet lady—and oh!—what torture it is to me—the thought still haunts me—that I have been the cause of dividing two hearts, which were created to constitute the happiness of each other; I should be so calm—so peaceful—no thoughts but those of heaven would intrude themselves upon my mind, were it not for this one care, which seems to impede my progress—drags me down to earthly feelings. Lady Constance has promised to visit me to-morrow—will you, dearest, kindest lady—will you endeavour to contrive this, by me, so much desired meeting. Can you not bring Lord Fitz-Ernest, at the same time, into my presence?"

Lady Belmont hesitated. She felt that it would be almost too great a trial for all parties, and Rosalie perceiving and reading her thoughts, exclaimed with the most vehement earnestness,

"Oh, lady, do not falter in your acquiescence to my request; I have pondered deeply upon what I now propose—Fitz-Ernest thinks of me as I was in those days, when sickness had not robbed me of external advantages—I believe that I was fair to look upon; and now he will see me as I am at this moment—a death-like shadow about to pass away—the very sight of my spectre-like form, will at once chase every remaining feeling, but that of sadness. My voice will be like one speaking from the grave. My hollow feeble accents will sound the note of death, and truly happy should I be, could its last remaining breath be spent in imploring him to be true to her, who will be the joy and consolation of his future life. Do not deem my request impracticable—romantic—rely upon me—the words of one, hovering between life and death, are sometimes prophetic. I see you will promise me; and then the dying Rosalie will not have one wish ungratified."

Since Fitz-Ernest had seen Rosalie, a change indeed had come over her. When last he looked upon her, she was in the full radiance of dress—of brilliancy. The work of death had not then commenced its final—fatal havoc—the bud was still beautiful, and perfect to the sight, although the destroying canker worm had begun its devouring work, within its folded leaves. As Rosalie had imagined, when Fitz-Ernest dwelt upon her memory, he saw her image as it had been on that fatal night, when clinging to his feet in all the graceful abandon of grief, she deprecated his rash passion. He saw her, as she was then, with the rich dress of crimson, the golden ornaments encircling her arms and waist—her splendid hair, floating in wild luxuriance over her neck and bosom; he did, indeed, think of her as the beautiful woman, and as such, notwithstanding all his efforts to conquer the feeling he still felt towards her. He heard that she was ill—lying, but still it was the lovely—the fascinating Rosalie—the actress whose talent had enlivened the hearts of all who saw her, whose image glittered in his mind.

The morning after Rosalie so earnestly requested to see him, Fitz-Ernest, with a heart sinking with emotion, and steps tremulous with the agitation which shook his whole frame, followed his mother into a room, whose chastened light threw a sort of quiet shade over every object; and how feebly could words portray his feelings, when his eyes fell on all that remained of the lovely—fascinating *cantatrice*.

On a couch she lay, wrapped in the folds of a white dress, her head supported by pillows; and had it not been for the relief of a tress of raven black, that had escaped from the small cap which confined the still luxuriant hair—and for the shade of the lashes, which fringed her half closed eyes—so marble were the cheeks—the lips of the reclining figure, that amidst the mass of white drapery which surrounded it, at first sight the face could scarcely be discerned; but as Lady Belmont approached the sofa, Rosalie suddenly opened her eyes; and neither disease nor the near approach of death, had been able to dim their lustre; like the glow-worm, their light shone forth brightly, enlivening for a moment the surrounding gloom. Affection beamed fondly as she looked upon her friend, and a flash of more vivid feeling darted from them, as they rested upon Fitz-Ernest, who, motionless from agitation, was unable to advance. But after a short pause the sick girl held out one of her thin, transparent hands.

"Fitz-Ernest," she said in a voice faint and hollow; with all her self-possession, for a brief moment there was a rush of feeling at her heart, which she believed till then she had wholly conquered.

Lady Belmont much affected left the room, and Fitz-Ernest, whom this appeal at once roused, was in another instant kneeling by her side, bending over the pale hand, which he pressed reverentially to his lips, whilst he vainly endeavoured to repress the grief, which trembled through his whole frame. Rosalie spoke,

"I have longed for this moment—ardently desired to see you—once more!—anxiety on your account, has been the greatest pain that I have endured; you find me altered—do not grieve for me. I thank Heaven, I am, no longer the Rosalie who has been the unintentional cause of so much evil—and, believe me, that I should be happy—perfectly happy—but for the thought of you. Yes," she continued, " 'tis in your power to calm my every remaining care."

Fitz-Ernest continued silent, his voice was choked with struggling tears. She, therefore, continued, "I shall die still with the wretched idea upon my conscience, that it is I, who have severed you from your betrothed—that it is I, who have caused disappointment to those to whom I owe so much—Oh! this dreadful thought, how it haunts me—torments me—how it interferes with my prayers, and breaks my feverish rest. Could I but see her hand in yours—could I but hear you plight your faith, to one who so well deserves your love—then should I," and she devoutly folded her hands upon her breast, "lay me down in peace, and take my rest—in tranquillity and happiness. I go to Fairbourne to-morrow, Fitz-Ernest—how thrice blest I shall be, if I am permitted, even for a few short hours only, to inhale once more the genial breezes which methinks will waft refreshment to my soul—if I can only carry with me a mind unshackled by the weight of this one heavy care."

As she thus spoke, Lady Belmont again entered the apartment, but she was not alone. In her hand she led Lady Constance Delaval. It was a moment of agonizing surprise to some of the assembled group—of agitation to all.

Lady Constance, at the sight of Fitz-Ernest, hid her face on the shoulder of Lady Belmont; and starting on his feet, he looked anxiously from the pale Rosalie to the drooping girl, who hung for support upon his mother.

"Fitz-Ernest," said Rosalie, "lead Lady Constance to me."

Fitz-Ernest instantly obeyed her command. He approached, and taking the hand of his destined bride, gently drew her towards the sofa. Rosalie raised herself, and looked fixedly from one to another; then addressing Fitz-Ernest she said, "Say you will love her—will you cherish her, as your beloved wife—and promise, that death alone shall again separate you."

Fitz-Ernest knelt beside her couch, and Constance, impelled by an impulse which she could not control, did so likewise.

"Rosalie," he said, in a voice which he in vain endeavoured to command, "if Constance will accept a heart so crushed and humbled with self-reproach as mine, which I now offer, I swear that I will be to her all that you desire, as soon as grief, such as I must feel, has had its allotted period. For you, I must sorrow, for I shall always feel that it is I who made you thus—that I have been the means of cutting short the thread of your sweet life."

"No; speak not so," she exclaimed, "at this moment of joy. Mr. Leslie," she cried, "will you promise to join these hands, to ensure their lasting felicity?"

Mr. Leslie came forward; he saw with dread—with terror, the excitement of Rosalie—her exhausted frame—how could she bear it? He approached, he had only time to assure her, that all

her wishes would be accomplished. A violent fit of coughing ensued, which left her exhausted—so feeble, that the very worst fears were excited.

But it seemed that the hope of reaching Fairbourne had almost the effect of keeping her alive; had it not been for that hope, she could scarcely have had the energy left to live.

For hours after this affecting interview, she seemed hovering between life and death; but at length she fell into a deep sleep, which lasted for a period so long, so unexpected, that those who lingered round her couch, with such anxious watchfulness, trembled, when the idea crossed their imaginations, that the sleep might become eternal—the sleep of death. However, to the astonishment of all, she awoke refreshed and strengthened, and all anxiety to commence her journey; and it was with wonder and thankfulness that, at length, she reached the haven, for which she had so long panted with such fervour.

CHAPTER LXII.

At the close of a beautiful summer's day, the carriage stopped at the door of the White Cottage. All was serene and calm. It was one of those still evenings, when the silence of nature bears rather the character of death, than of repose. Rosalie, when she was lifted out of the carriage, begged that she might be allowed to pause a few moments, before she entered the house. She felt that, in all probability, never again would she quit it, until that day, when she should be carried to her grave.

She gave a long, fond look around. The years that had passed had done much there. Every thing had flourished, improved. The shrubs, which her own hands had planted, were luxuriant in blossom; the trees which, when she had last seen them were in their infancy, full of leaf and vigorous in their growth. All had prospered save the blighted girl who now looked upon them. She had been transplanted from the genial soil, and had withered—was about to die; she had been formed to live under the glowing ray of kindness. The flower of the valley would die upon the mountain-top, as surely as would the hardy mountaineer, now flourishing upon the rugged Alpine heights, languish and fade, if transported to the valley.

For this moment had the poor girl sighed—oh! how ardently! and grateful was her heart, that her wishes were thus accomplished. But human nature will put forth its thorns—the bitter must ever mingle with the sweet; and when she looked round upon the scenes of her once joyful existence, when she felt that every object breathed of happiness, of which she was destined never to partake, it was but natural that a feeling of regret should rise in her heart, and she murmured faintly, "How happy could I be here." But she checked, with an effort, her rebellious thoughts, adding, "and I *am* happy—here to die."

She then requested to be taken into the house, and laid upon her own little bed, and from that bed she was scarcely ever moved again. The windows of the room commanded a view of the woods of Belmont Abbey, and from amidst their clustering summer foliage, rose the spire of Fairbourne church.

On this scene would Rosalie gaze with grateful rapture, and from the open casement she inhaled the fragrant perfume of her favourite flowers. All around seemed to waft healing on its wings. Supported by cushions, she lay feeble, but not suffering—life was ebbing gently from her. Death, as if in mercy to the sweet being it was about to claim

as its own, was not rough in its advances; imperceptibly, even to herself, was she drawing nearer and nearer to her last moments. Her weakness was great, but exquisite were her sources of enjoyment. All the friends she loved so well were by turns near her. She could lie tranquilly, and watch the dear countenance of the sweet friend of her youth, Lady Gertrude, who sat by her bed-side, either reading to her, or speaking with those accents of tenderness which had ever been so precious to the ear of Rosalie.

Certainly, the poor girl was highly favoured. There was a fascination about her, which had strangely interested the feelings of the whole family; and, from the first to the last, they were all influenced by it; from the noble father to the baby Algernon, all had been led captive by a charm which laid hold of the best feelings of their nature. And Mr. Leslie, who loved the dying girl so well, how did he bear up whilst watching her, daily, hourly, sinking into her last rest?

The old man surprised all around by the firmness which he now evinced. He had nerved himself, wound himself up to the trial. As long as there was a motive for the exertion, he would be found firm and steadfast; therefore no indulgence did he give to the softness of his heart. He called up all his resolution for the struggle, and was thus able to sit by the bedside of the departing spirit, breathing into her ear words of consolation, of strengthening aid.

Rosalie's mind was in a blessed state for translation from this world. She had long looked upon it as if it were receding from her view, and kept her eye steadily fixed upon another. But no vain-glorious feelings filled her mind; she was thoroughly humble; she knew her own imperfections, and prayed for forgiveness for her errors. She told Mr. Leslie that she was perfectly aware of the faults which, perhaps, had been the means of expediting her early death. Perchance, had she struggled more firmly against the morbid feelings to which she had given way, she might yet have been spared. She alluded to the dislike in which she had indulged to the career which it was the will of Providence should be her lot; and she would say; "There was another feeling, dear Mr. Leslie, that I nurtured to my destruction—which I cherished in my breast, when I ought to have plucked it out at the very first, and not allowed it to have taken such root, that its fibres had twisted about my very heart-strings! so that when I did, indeed, tear it thence—oh! it was at the forfeit of my life! My short existence," she added, "would be a lesson of wisdom could it be read. It might teach that unqualified submission to every decree of heaven is a duty to which all should strive most earnestly to attain. Had I, instead of giving way to despondency, beheld my trials in their proper light—had I remembered from whence they came, the aggravated circumstances of my case might have affected me less. I ought to have recollected, that the faults which spring up in the luxuriant soil of happiness require the firm hand of adversity to extirpate them. In his love, in his mercy, the Almighty had stricken me, and I ought to have been resigned. My fate might be a warning to the young, the ardent. It might tell them not to make for themselves idols. I formed one in my heart and how enervating was its effect upon my mind. It took from me the power of exertion, and thus I sunk under the weight of what I had to endure. There are moments in my feverish existence to which I look back with horror, moments of frantic delusion, unsustained by religious hope; but the mercy vouchsafed to me has been great; and though late, the effort was made, has succeeded, and now I have cast all off,—every earthly care, every worldly

hope, and I turn my thoughts, and look alone to heaven."

Thus would Rosalie converse with her faithful, excellent friend, and in his arms at length she expired!

It was on a lovely evening of one of those summer days, which seem so bright that it is loath to close; the afternoon had been hot and sultry, but Rosalie felt not its genial warmth; the cold damps of death were gathering upon her; the sun was about to set, and a red gleam of a departing ray shone full into this chamber of sorrow.

Rosalie, who had been lying quietly, and apparently sleeping, suddenly opened her eyes. Lady Belmont, who had been watching by her, rose hastily to let down the curtain. She feared the light had disturbed her; but Rosalie said, "No, no, dear lady, I love to look at it." Presently the bright glow grew fainter and fainter, and soon a gloom succeeded its brilliancy. Silence reigned in the apartment; it was broken by Rosalie, who faintly said, "Mr. Leslie, take me in your arms, the moment is arrived."

The heart-stricken old man passively obeyed.

Once or twice she looked at him without speaking a word, and then lifted up her eyes in such a manner, that it is utterly impossible for description to portray. But her faithful friend understood her perfectly. It was with a mixture of regret—of confidence in God—and of certainty that she was dying—that she looked from him to heaven.

Never—never, though often in sorrow and joy he had looked up with her to the throne of mercy, never had he seen her thus. The situation of a dying person is so singular, it seems neither to belong to this world or to the next.

She whispered to him, "You have ever been my guardian angel—dearest and best of friends, farewell—you will soon follow me;" these were her last words.

But her still unglazed eyes fixed themselves with a never to be forgotten expression of tenderness on Lady Belmont, and her hand sought that of her attached nurse, who had been summoned hastily to the room; these were the last testimonies of expiring love. "The feeble—fluttering—thrilling—oh! how thrilling, pressure of the hand—the last fond look of the glazing eye turning upon her benefactress, even from the threshold of existence, the faint, faltering accents, struggling in death to give one more assurance of affection."

And thus she died; with the calm serene smile of a saint upon her lips. She was ripe from her birth, into the life of an angel. Long already had she sought for happiness from the fountain whence blest spirits derive their bliss.

She was proved by her sufferings. For a few short years did she feel the lot of mortality; and these struggles, in which by her patience she so nobly gave proof of submission to her Heavenly Father, we humbly hope have rendered her entrance into the land of bliss the more certain.

Surrounded by her dearest friends, she died happy, and her death was but a passage into that eternal state, in which we confidently rely that her happiness will be far greater than that of the most favoured of those she leaves on earth.

"For when the short repose of death is past,
Then transport follows—bliss! eternal bliss!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

Deep was the sorrow which reigned around. Rosalie was indeed gone! those eyes of beauty were

closed, never more to fix their radiant glances on those she so much loved. It was a sad moment for all, for though the event had been for some time hourly expected, yet when it did arrive, every one seemed unprepared.

The young people received the intelligence with that burst of strong and genuine grief, which is the characteristic of their age, but Lady Gertrude's sorrow was not the tear forgot as soon as shed; her love for Rosalie had indeed grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength, and in vain she tried to calm her feelings; it was not till after her mother had led her weeping child to the bed, on which the remains of the poor girl were laid, that Lady Gertrude could in any way tranquilize her mind; and it was after a most painful struggle that she at last prevailed upon herself to look upon a spectacle which she imagined would harrow up her every feeling.

But Lady Belmont thought otherwise, and she was right; for when the sorrowing girl gazed on her cherished friend, how could she repine at her lot, for pen can feebly portray the heavenly composure which breathed from her countenance—the happy, mild and angelic air which pervaded its every expression, truly:—

"The rapture of repose was there."

No symptom of pain or sorrow were to be traced in the beautiful marble face.

She still might doubt the tyrant's power,
So fair—so calm—so softly sealed.

Long did Lady Gertrude linger by the side of her, whose remembrance would ever be so dear.

A kind of fascination chained her to the spot—a sweet and soothing sorrow had usurped the place of turbulent grief. And could she, in her selfish regret, have wished to recall the sweet sufferer to this world, which to her had been one of such sadness?—oh no!

"Pleased would she rather hail her glorious flight,
And trace her progress to the realms of day."

But the moment had arrived, she must take a final farewell of all that was left of the still beautiful Rosalie.

Gertrude knelt by the side of the bed, and buried her face within her hand. The aspirations of her pure young heart, could they have been heard, would have breathed no doubt of piety and holy thoughts, for she was praying. We can imagine the scene was one of deep, of affecting interest. She had begged to be left alone for a few moments and Lady Belmont, who well knew her child, felt convinced that what she asked would contribute to her future solace.

What a contrast between the two friends. Lady Gertrude with every pulse beating in her animated frame, in the full powers of vitality, her cheeks flushed with emotion—with all her feelings, fresh, ardent and glowing; and then to look upon the cold, lifeless, statue-looking form which was stretched upon the bed of death; and to think that she was, but a brief space before, the radiant *cuntatrice*, whose talents, whose beauty had captivated thousands. But in death, she was still most lovely to look upon. She seemed as if in a deep sleep; the tender hand of her nurse had arranged her last dress with the most exquisite care, and although with a heart half-broken, the sad office had been performed, still she lingered over it; it was her last—last service. One dark tress had been arranged on either side of her fair face, and oh! the beauty of her long dark lashes! and the ~~gentle~~

brows, now more than ever conspicuous, from the startling whiteness of the skin.

The room was decorated with the choicest flowers that the gardens and green-houses could afford, but one magnificent white moss rose alone was permitted to be placed on the corpse. It seemed truly the emblem of her own sweet self.

Gertrude, deeply engaged in her own absorbing thoughts, scarcely heeded the opening of the door, nor the approach of another person, until she felt that some one was kneeling by her side. She uncovered her eyes, and beheld Mr. Leslie, and then she felt that her sorrow, great as it was, could not be compared to that which he suffered. She had not seen him since the event had taken place; she was aware that she was not sufficiently firm and composed for an interview so affecting to both. Her agitation must increase his, and now, as her eye fell on his pale, haggard countenance—in his form that was shrunk to a degree which was quite startling to behold, she read a tale of grief which checked her own emotions. Truly he looked the broken hearted father of an only child.

"Mr. Leslie," she cried, "bless God with me, for his goodness to this beloved being. See how in death she smiles upon us."

And indeed she might have expressed herself in the beautiful words of the poet:

"Was this then death?

Oh, soft yet sudden change!—what shall I call thee!
No more—no more thy name be death."

Gertrude felt now was the time to nerve her own spirits and turn comforter.

"Remember," she added, "all the sufferings of her life; how little she was formed to struggle through the difficulties that surrounded her. I felt selfishly—almost sinfully, before I had seen her thus; and now even I, her friend, who loved her with an attachment only to be equalled by yours, little could I have believed that even I should think it wicked to wish to recall her to this mortal state."

Mr. Leslie bowed his head; his lips faintly murmured the word, "Amen," but there was a deep despondency in his air which was truly affecting.

"Let me take her place, dear Sir; let me be to you the daughter of your remaining years," cried Lady Gertrude. "I know I can never be like her in your affections; but still, as the friend whom she so dearly loved, I may be precious; and here by the side of her remains, I pledge myself to be your devoted, affectionate child. It will ever be the sweetest study of my life to endeavour to alleviate your sorrow."

The afflicted old man could only weep his answer. He pressed the kind hands of the sweet girl repeatedly to his lips, to his heart, seeking thus to show his gratitude. But he looked upon the countenance of the inanimate Rosalie, and he felt that, in this world, all was over with him; that at his advanced age nothing again could revive the crushed affections of his heart. All that remained to him whilst he existed, was to hope and pray that he might be united in another existence to her in whose grave was buried his warmest earthly feelings.

CHAPTER LXIV.

The story of Rosalie is now almost at an end. A few more parting words, and all that relates to her will be told. In death, she was honoured and cherished as she had ever been when living, by the friends who had taken such a warm interest in her

welfare. In the spot she had so long marked out, as the resting place for which she so ardently panted, the shaded corner in the church-yard of Fairbourne, under the shelter of the old yew tree, did they prepare her grave, and it was with a touching degree of tenderness and consideration to her slightest wish that every arrangement had been made. It was characteristic of the kindness of feeling which actuated each member of this amiable family. Perhaps no funeral pageant was ever more affecting, than the simple, unostentatious burial of this poor girl. The heart-stirring sound of the passing bell tolled its notes on every ear, and stole with its pervading melancholy over every hill and valley, giving a saddening influence to all the landscape.

The hour for the ceremony had been fixed to take place in the evening. The splendour of the summer sun would then be dimmed. They all felt that its bright cheerful glare would be like mockery to their sadness! It was an interesting sight, though very mournful.

Honoured were the remains of Rosalie, by the presence of the noble Marquis and his younger sons; Fitz-Ernest was not there. The spot itself was beautiful and picturesque in the extreme. The red shades which lingered at the close of a lovely day, gave a glowing tint to all around; and a thrush, that had long built its nest in the old yew tree, was pouring forth its sweetest melody—it sounded like nature's requiem to the child of song.

On looking upon the countenances of those who stood around the grave, what different aspects sorrow exhibited! Mr. Leslie, enfeebled to the lowest ebb of weakness, from the sufferings of his mind, leant for support upon the arm of the young Lord Henry. The breeze had wafted his scanty gray hairs into disorder over his furrowed brow—his eyes were red and heavy, but he did not weep; his gaze was fixed upon the coffin, with an expression of hopeless thought—noiseless grief. But the affectionate youth who now sustained him, the very personification of happiness—of manly beauty, how unchecked were the sobs of sympathy and feeling that heaved from his breast! Death, how appalling is it to the young and happy! As we grow older we learn to look upon it in a manner less terrifying. The evils of the world have taught us, as we progressed in our journey of life, that there are worse trials to endure than even the death of those we idolize. But to the young it is viewed as the horror of horrors. They look not upon it as the mild angel of death, but as the king of terrors.—They have not gathered the experience of evil. Hope is in its infancy, and gilds the future with the bright visions of anticipated happiness!

And then the sorrowing nurse! She who had watched the flower from its first sweet bud, who had tended it, nourished it with her own hand, administered to it through weal and wo, how tenderly! how faithfully! Now her task of love was over, and in the care-worn countenance of the poor woman, the feelings of her heart might plainly be read. Humbly had this kind servant performed her duty. No recompense had she sought, but that which she derived from the comfort of feeling useful to her she served with such fidelity and devotion; and confidently may we trust that actions such as hers are noted by Him whose eye is on every labour of love, every Christian sympathy, every virtue humbly exercised. Tender were the tears that fell upon the new-made grave, and slow and lingering were the steps of the mourners, who at length retreated from it.

Mr. Leslie was borne almost lifeless to the Abbey, and if tender unremitting kindness could have soothed his griefs, he might have been comforted. There were those whose delicate assiduousness were

increasing in their efforts to assuage his anguish; but sorrow, although it does not often kill, may yet bow down the soul to a state so low that, though existence continues to ebb on, it is a darkened, dreary state; and "let those vouch for the truth of this idea, who have had the portals of the tomb closed between them and the being they have loved best on earth—who have sat on its threshold, and are, as it were, shut out in a cold and lonely world, from whence all that was most lovely and loving has departed." For many and many a sad day, he walked about in a mournful reverie, seemingly unconscious of the world around him; and though he lived on, it was in a fixed and constant depression of spirits. "The agony of the first feeling might have softened into pensive meditation of all that she was in her short life. He did not attempt to root out the remembrance from his heart; it was with him when he died, although then it had changed into joyful expectation.

And Fitz-Ernest, did he endure with calmness the intelligence that all was over? It was midnight—all was hushed and still at the White Cottage, but a light glimmered from the window where Johnson sat watching, for the last night. The coffin was still unclosed, and no change had yet come over the features of the pale corpse that it contained.

A faint knock was heard at the cottage door. Johnson appeared as if she had expected it, for immediately she arose—softly descended the stairs, opened the door, and let in the tall figure of a man, whose person was concealed by a large cloak.

He seized her hand convulsively, no words were uttered, but, in the stillness of the night, sounds of suppressed grief were heard to burst from both.—The stranger seemed to pause, as if irresolute—as if striving to gain strength for some great effort. At length he whispered in a low hollow voice, "I am prepared—let me go at once;" and then he followed Johnson into the chamber of death. And there we will not intrude. It was a hallowed sanctuary—we will not expose to the public eye, all the anguish of his labouring heart, as he gazed upon her whom he accused himself of having precipitated into an early grave—at least, whose ungoverned passions had expedited her death.

He had suffered much, and deeply had he repented; in sackcloth and ashes would he now have deplored his errors.

After a lengthened time passed within the sacred precincts of this chamber, Fitz-Ernest departed, and it was with a heart purified. Never did the impression which he this night received, leave his mind. To the hour of his dissolution, it will assuredly serve as an impressive monitor, and Rosalie's wishes will indeed be fulfilled to their utmost extent. And if it is permitted that blessed spirits may look upon those they have left on earth, what delight to her celestial perception to know that he, whom she so truly, so purely loved, was blessed in goodness, in virtue—learnt in that one lesson, in which she played so conspicuous a part—that fatal yielding to the dictates of a morbid ungoverned feeling.

The white rose placed on the bosom of the fair remains, was gone, and also a tress of her hair; and whenever Fitz-Ernest pays the debt of mortality, no doubt these relics will be found in some secret recess, where he has ever fondly and faithfully treasured them.

CONCLUSION.

Some time has passed, since the subsequent passages were written.

Sir Francis Somerville, to the astonishment of every one, after a lengthened and most painful illness, recovered entirely from the effects of the wound inflicted by the unhappy Arturo. To complete his restoration he was advised to pass a winter abroad, and thither he went, accompanied by Mr. Leslie, who, at the repeated and earnest entreaties of the Baronet, was at length induced to make so great an effort. This almost broken-hearted old man was certainly one of the last companions whom we should have imagined the gay Sir Francis would have chosen, but so it was: and he urged his request in a manner which, after some demur, overcame all Mr. Leslie's scruples; and, truly, could he ever again experience feelings of satisfaction, they might have been engendered by witnessing daily, hourly, the improvement of the mind and heart of the young man. The experience of sorrow, of sickness, had wrought a total change in his ideas; the whole aspect of his thoughts had altered; till now, he had turned his eyes sedulously from the dark side of life, and had looked upon this world in one light alone, and that a flattering one.

But, touched by the hand of adversity, the very fabric of bliss that fancy had raised up for him, vanished away. He beheld this world, stripped of its gaudy colours, reduced to its proper level. The time he had misspent, the faculties he had misapplied; his foolish levity; his criminal pursuits, all arose in painful retrospect before him.

Such meditation, assisted by the words of the excellent and pious old man, produced a total change in his character. They revived those faint sparks of goodness in his nature, which had so nearly been extinguished in his dissipated career; and gave rise at last to principles and conduct, which ensured his future respectability and excellence.

Lord and Lady Belmont had already become much interested in their nephew—anxiously had they tended him, during the period when he lay in so hopeless a state, in Gabrielli's parlour in Regent Street; even then, the patience with which he supported his sufferings, and his generous forgiveness of the wretched Italian, had propitiated their love and admiration; and when, after a lengthened period spent on the continent, (during which time they corresponded constantly,) he returned to England, it was with affection and pleasure they received him.

On Sir Francis Somerville's return to London, he again entered into the world; but he had marked out for himself a decidedly different line, from that which he had taken formerly. He had sold his house and furniture in Hill street, and had purchased another mansion. There were recollections that he gladly would banish for ever from his mind, for the impression they had left was still painful in the extreme.

He went more into general society, and took his place as a man of fortune and talent. By degrees he shook off all intimacy with his former associates, and with them his *ci-devant* companion, Templeton; but he was kind to him as far as his purse was concerned, and exerted his interest to get him some small situation abroad, as he had married Fanny, and was any thing but "flush," as he termed it, in his circumstances.

When this story was concluded, there was a prospect that seemed every day ripening into certainty, which was, that of our Baronet being a suitor for the hand and heart of one of his fair cousins—and there is little doubt that Lady Geraldine will have every prospect of happiness with one who has so nobly shaken off the chains of vanity and folly. He had been betrayed by the flattering gale—he was insensibly carried down the stream, by the multitude of evil doers who are for ever sur-

rounding the young and prosperous; but being aroused by the sense of danger, he manfully overcame the evil, by a steady adherence to the dictates of conscience and duty; and, in his future life, his station, his fortune, his talents, will be exercised in their proper manner—no longer as heretofore, merely to administer to self-indulgence and luxury, but earnestly and unceasingly applying them to their legitimate purposes—shedding light and lustre over the sphere in which he moves.

Prosperity continued to pour its rich stream upon the Belmont family. They were so truly good and excellent—every action of their lives so influenced to one feeling, the desire of doing their duty to God and man, that surely a blessing accompanied every event of their lives. Nothing befalls the virtuous fortuitously. Each circumstance possesses its link in that great chain of causes, which is appointed to carry on their improvement and felicity. Even the seemingly discordant chances in the lives of good men, are made upon the whole to concur and conspire for promoting their happiness at last.

Lady Gertrude, the constant, tender friend of Rosalie, is happy as a wife and as a mother. The same warm affectionate nature which shone so conspicuously in early youth, influenced her feelings in all the new ties which in after life she acquired; but present happiness has not obliterated the memory of the past; and in the unremitting respect, and tender, almost filial affection which she evinces towards Mr. Leslie, her never-ceasing love for the lost Rosalie is most beautifully portrayed.

Mrs. Elton, or rather Madame Gabrielli, remained at the White Cottage until her death, which took place about six months after the demise of her daughter. The devoted nurse remained a favoured guest at the Abbey, until Mr. Leslie's return from the continent; and then she took up her abode with him, at a small home in which he settled, a few miles from the village of Fairbourne; and she served him with that fidelity and kindness which had ever characterized her actions.

Mr. Leslie could not listen to the wishes of his friends, that he should remain constantly at the Abbey. He wished, he said, to be within an easy distance of his place of burial, but he had not courage to revisit a spot saddened by so many bitter reflections. His was

"An eye which could not brook
A moment on that grave to look."

His life however was cheered by a constant sight of every member of a family who alone had the

power of reviving any feeling of interest in his heart. Fain would they have overwhelmed him with proofs of their esteem, but his wants were few, and his wishes were bounded to the one hope which alone sustained his drooping spirits—that of soon quitting this world, and rejoining the child of his affections in another and happier existence; but it was grateful to his kind heart to know that prosperity and happiness were the lot of those he knew to be so worthy of every blessing.

The last act of his clerical life was to read the nuptial benediction over Fitz-Ernest and Lady Constance. We will not attempt to fathom any of the feelings which must have strongly agitated the hearts of those three persons on that occasion. Mr. Leslie had performed a sacred promise, and he felt relieved of a load of responsibility; and it is with real satisfaction that I am enabled to add that the event brought with it the happiest results. The future lives of Fitz-Ernest and Constance were truly peaceful, truly happy, and every year that passed strengthened the attachment which Fitz-Ernest felt towards his tender and loving wife.

Gentle reader, should your steps ever lead you to the neighbourhood of Fairbourne, visit the picturesque church-yard, and in a shaded corner on the south side of the church—you will be directed to it by the conspicuous and wide-spreading yew tree—there you will see a grave. It is surrounded by a handsome iron railing. Within its enclosure, if perchance it should be summer, your eye will be attracted by a blaze of blossom—for there the choicest roses are planted, and flourish in the richest luxuriance.

Not a blade of rank grass—not a noxious weed—dares to spring near this consecrated spot! A gardener who formerly lived with Mr. Leslie, and who now works at the Abbey, has in his possession a key of the enclosure, and it is his office—one which he fulfils with assiduous care—to keep the cherished spot in the most exquisite order.

A large flat stone had at first alone been placed over the opening of the vault, which had been constructed underneath; but now there stands upon it a marble pedestal, bearing on its base a small vase, of the most chaste and beautiful workmanship. An unknown hand had done this. From whence it came has never yet been ascertained. Indeed, few inquiries were ever made upon the subject. On the vase was inscribed the following words—

"Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet!
And young as beautiful! and good as young!"

THE END.



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